

The New Criterion ^{35th} anniversary

January 2017

A monthly review *edited by Roger Kimball*

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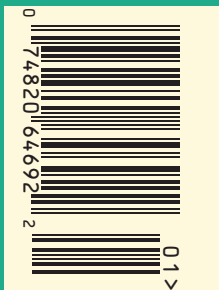
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Notes & Comments: January 2017

Why the Left hates tolerance

A large portion of this issue is devoted to essays that conjure with the problem of free speech in the academy. The “problem,” it may almost go without saying, is that the academy is increasingly inimical to free speech, free inquiry, free action, and free minds. The dissemination of political correctness, subordinating the pursuit of truth to the imposition of political dogma, sacrifices freedom on the altar of virtue, or supposed virtue. The half-dozen essays that follow anatomize that mournful, multifarious drama. It is a thorough and dispiriting sequence of reflections. Taken together, they reveal an institution in crisis. It’s not so much that the academy has turned its back on its traditional *raison d’être*—the pursuit of truth and the propagation of civilization. No, it’s worse than that. The academy has increasingly embraced an ethic that is positively inimical to its founding principles. “Nowadays,” Georg Lichtenberg mordantly observed, “we everywhere seek to propagate wisdom: who knows whether in a couple of centuries there may not exist universities for restoring the old ignorance.”

As it turns out, Lichtenberg didn’t go far enough. For the old ignorance looks pretty good when compared to the new variety. At least the ignorance of yore was content to subsist in its lack of knowledge. The new variety

is infatuated with a sense of self-importance and wants to proselytize. Can there be anything more to be said on the subject? It turns out that there is. When it comes to minatory absurdity, the contemporary academy is a gift that keeps on giving. Every nadir is provisional, a basement floor that conceals a seemingly endless series of sub-basements. Which means that the task of docketing the excavation is also endless. For example, we had just wrapped up our series of essays on free speech and the academy when we received a bulletin from Washington State University announcing that twenty-odd “scholars” (many from the department of “Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies”: you can’t make it up) had issued an open letter denouncing “discourses of free speech.” It is truly a special document, destined to be prized by connoisseurs of cant.

What are “discourses of free speech”? That would be speech unpoliced by the self-appointed guardians of virtue. Hark: “It is not enough,” these modern Robespierres declare, to

encourage “open-mindedness” and “sensitivity” especially when these passive efforts and rhetoric invariably lead to a culture that accepts and tolerates bigotry and harassment; a campus culture that hides behind “tolerance” and discourses of free speech undeviatingly creates a campus that is especially disempowering to marginalized students.

Let us pause to consider the semantic significance of those deflationary scare quotes. There is a difference between open-mindedness and “open-mindedness,” just as there is a difference between fresh fish and “fresh” fish. The quotation marks are intended to withdraw the indicative or declaratory aspect of the assertion. You are meant to understand that what we are talking about is not genuine open-mindedness or tolerance but somehow dubious simulacra of those virtues.

There are, we should mention, perfectly legitimate uses of this technique of epistemic sabotage, as, for example, in the case when the fish really isn’t fresh, only “fresh,” or, as above, when the scholars are only “scholars.”

But when we read in this open letter from the WSU faculty that “It is not enough to call for ‘tolerance’ or encourage ‘respect’ for all opinions,” we know that they intend a two-stroke act of semantic sabotage. First, they call into question the cogency or authenticity of the concepts of tolerance and respect as traditionally understood. Second, they substitute a supposedly higher understanding of those virtues whose true effect is not to perfect but to undermine those virtues. So: “We must create a campus that asserts that we are anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-xenophobia, anti-homophobic, anti-Islamophobic, anti-ableism, and anti-bigotry. We must work to create mechanisms and structures that combat hate, which empower all constituencies to be active in our collective efforts to rid the campus of bigotry and systemic inequality.”

This procedure is reminiscent of Herbert Marcuse’s attack on tolerance as commonly understood as a “false,” “bad,” or (famous phrase) “repressive tolerance.” Against this evil he advocated what he called “liberating tolerance.” What is liberating tolerance? Simple: “intolerance against movement from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”

The classical liberal (who is also the contemporary conservative) championed tolerance because it helped maintain a space for civilized

disagreement. Many readers will recall hearing sentences like this: “I disagree with you but support your right to voice your opinion.” How quaint that now sounds! The modern social justice warrior abominates disagreement as a form of heresy. Accordingly, he rejects tolerance in favor of enforced, indeed totalitarian, conformity. It is the antithesis of what a liberal-arts education was all about, which is why its installation at the center of our erstwhile liberal-arts institutions makes for such a sad irony.

Elsewhere in the republic of letters

The cost of attending the University of Pennsylvania this year is \$69,340. Bear that in mind as you savor the latest news from the university’s English Department. Students, upset that a portrait of a dead white guy named William Shakespeare was taking up valuable wall space in the department’s hallways, removed the picture and replaced it with a photograph of Audre Lourde, a black feminist writer. “Students removed the Shakespeare portrait and delivered it to my office as a way of affirming their commitment to a more inclusive mission for the English department,” said Jed Esty, chair of the department. He seemed quite taken with the gesture. “We invite everyone to join us in the task of critical thinking about the changing nature of authorship, the history of language, and the political life of symbols,” he said in an email. Right. As we mentioned, sixty-nine thousand three hundred and forty dollars. Save your money.

Meanwhile, at The New York Times

Have you ever heard of Glenn Thrush? He is the self-described “hack” who, while working at *Politico*, sent a story he was working on to Hillary Clinton’s campaign chairman John Podesta for his approval. “I will send u the whole section that pertains to u,” he wrote. “Please don’t share or tell anyone I did this.”

Too late! Wikileaks published the communication so all the world knows about it now. *The New York Times* must have liked what they saw, for they just hired Thrush away from *Politico*. “We’re thrilled that Glenn Thrush is joining the *Times*,” chirped Elisabeth Bumiller, the paper’s Washington bureau chief. “He’s a premier political journalist, a master of breaking news and long-form story telling and a stellar addition to our White House team.” What can we say?

Fidel Castro, 1926–2016

When Fidel Castro finally shuffled off his mortal coil at the end of November, the world’s response was sharply divided. Pope Francis expressed his sadness and “grief” at Castro’s passing. The Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressed his sorrow at the death of the “larger than life leader.” In the United Kingdom, the British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn concurred, describing Castro as a “massive figure in the history of the whole planet” and praising his “heroism” and work for “social justice.” Then there was the aspiring totalitarian Jean-Claude Juncker, head of the European Union, who tweeted: “With the death of #FidelCastro, the world has lost a man who was a hero for many.” *The New York Times* weighed in with an intermittently sycophantic expostulation. Castro wielded power “like a tyrant,” the paper acknowledged, but he was also “the fiery apostle of revolution,” a “towering international figure,” who “bedeviled eleven American presidents.” Admiration swamped criticism. It was always thus at the *Times*. Back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Castro had no more fervent apologist than the Timesman Herbert Matthews. There was a reason that *National Review* once ran an ad campaign featuring a picture of Castro

with the legend “I got my job through *The New York Times*.” The official White House response was a masterpiece of equivocation. “At this time of Fidel Castro’s passing, we extend a hand of friendship to the Cuban people. We know that this moment fills Cubans . . . with powerful emotions, recalling the countless ways in which Fidel Castro altered the course of individual lives, families, and of the Cuban nation.” Er, yes. Just think of the thousands who are dead and maimed because of Castro. That’s “altering the course” all right!

The response of President-elect Donald Trump was quite different. Shortly after the news broke, he availed himself of his favorite medium, Twitter, to note “Fidel Castro is dead!” A few hours later his office released this statement:

Today, the world marks the passing of a brutal dictator who oppressed his own people for nearly six decades.

Fidel Castro’s legacy is one of firing squads, theft, unimaginable suffering, poverty and the denial of fundamental human rights. While Cuba remains a totalitarian island, it is my hope that today marks a move away from the horrors endured for too long, and toward a future in which the wonderful Cuban people finally live in the freedom they so richly deserve.

A partial but fully documented listing of Castro’s crimes against humanity is collected at a website appropriately called “Castro’s Greatest Atrocities and Crimes.” For more than five decades, Fidel Castro kept the people of Cuba under the jackboot of Communist tyranny. When he relinquished power in 2006, it was only to pass on the tyranny to his brother Raúl. It’s nice that someone in public life was willing to tell the truth about those monsters.

A bulwark against tyranny

by James Piereson

In a pre-election issue of *The New Yorker*, the editors placed a cartoon on the cover of the magazine depicting George Washington and Abraham Lincoln looking in horror at a television screen showing Donald Trump delivering one of his campaign speeches. The message was clear enough: Mr. Lincoln and the Founding Fathers, if they could be with us today, would be appalled at the spectacle of the billionaire mogul running for president as the authentic voice of the people. Many commentators on the left and right, and in between, joined in agreement to say that the Founders designed the Constitution precisely to prevent populist demagogues from getting anywhere near the presidency. There was considerable confusion in these circles as to whether they judged Mr. Trump to be an authentic populist or just another standard-brand candidate claiming to speak for the people—or, indeed, if they were saying nothing more than that a successful candidate who disagrees with them must be by definition a demagogue. Nevertheless, now that Mr. Trump has won the election, they are singing a slightly different tune, now relying upon the checks and balances in the Constitution to keep him from carrying out some of the policies he called for during his campaign.

It is heartening to hear these appeals to the Founding Fathers from liberals and leftists who typically scorn the Constitution as an out-of-date relic from the eighteenth century that does far too much to protect minorities and not enough to empower majorities. This is

the refrain that we have been hearing for close to a century since Progressives like Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt launched the modern critique of the Constitution. The separation of powers promotes gridlock and governmental ineffectiveness; the equal representation of the states in the Senate gives too much power to small states at the expense of the large ones; federalism is a tool that permits states to resist national majorities; the Supreme Court has more power than it should have in a popular system; the Constitution is far too difficult to amend and far too complex for the average citizen to understand. These critics, and there are many of them, prefer a framework of government that is less complex and more democratic or majoritarian than the one the Founders left us with, perhaps something resembling the parliamentary system in Great Britain or the initiative and referendum system for making policy used in California and in a few other states. In those systems, electoral majorities are able quickly to translate their victories into public policy without much regard for the opinions of the minority, which is the standard the critics use to measure “democracy” and “majority rule.”

Many find these arguments against the Constitution persuasive from an intellectual point of view—at least until they find themselves on the losing side of an election or two, at which point the indirect and complicated character of the Constitution looks like a political lifeboat that is conveniently available to save them from being overwhelmed by the majority. This

seems to be where we are today with those in the national press or others close to the centers of power in Washington who never imagined that Mr. Trump could be elected President, much less carry his party into majorities in the House and Senate. Many who yesterday saw the Constitution as an impediment to their desires are relieved today to find that it also acts as a reciprocal impediment for their adversaries. Their credo, to paraphrase Mr. Dooley, might be summarized as, “Throw out the Constitution—on the other hand, not so fast!”

The framers of the Constitution did not use the term “populism,” but they were aware of the phenomenon it describes—that is, an uprising by the voters against what they judge to be a corrupt or out-of-touch elite. James Madison, for example, referred to something roughly similar in his extensive discussions in the *Federalist* of factions and “factious majorities.” To a considerable degree, the challenges posed by “populism” were front and center in the debates that eventually produced the Constitution. For better or worse, the framework Madison was instrumental in creating does not easily allow for the kind of popular referendum through which a majority of voters in Great Britain decided to pull that country out of the European Union, or the more recent referendum in Italy through which voters turned down a package of constitutional reforms. In this sense, the U.S. Constitution operates as an impediment to populism because it substitutes representation and deliberation for national referenda and direct democracy.

In the United States, of course, voters can decide to pull out of a treaty or an alliance or repeal a law, but they must do so indirectly by first electing a willing President and Congress, and then hoping that the two can find enough common ground to enact a program—and then sustain that program through subsequent elections. Under the U.S. Constitution, a populist “moment” is not sufficient to win the long game; the moment must be sustained over a sequence of elections such that a temporary uprising of voters is translated into a durable governing majority, which is a difficult thing to accomplish in a country as large and di-

verse as the United States, as the Founders well understood.

The populist moment that we seem to be in, here and abroad, is a propitious occasion to reconsider some contemporary assumptions about democracy and majority rule in relation to the arguments advanced by the Founders on those same subjects. Many today are instinctively inclined toward democracy and majority rule but are also worried about the implications of “populism.” Can they have it both ways? After all, populism, to the extent that we use it in a pejorative way, implies that majority rule is not always a good thing, and that, as James Madison argued in the *Federalist*, there can be “bad” majorities as well as “good” ones. How do we tell the difference? And how does one design a system to deter or to deflect these “bad” majorities? Once we raise such questions, we enter into the political and intellectual world of Madison and the Founders.

If George Washington was “the father of his country,” then, according to one of his contemporaries, James Madison was the “father of the Constitution.” Madison outlined the first draft of the Constitution, kept a diary of the debates at the federal convention, set forth the philosophical foundations of the document in several key entries in the *Federalist*, maneuvered it through to ratification, and then wrote the Bill of Rights as a series of amendments to the Constitution. Later he helped to implement and guide the system as a Congressman, party leader, Secretary of State, and, finally, as President of the United States. No other member of the founding generation could lay claim to such an impressive list of accomplishments.

Nevertheless, it is as the principal intellectual architect of the Constitution that Madison is most well known to us today, and it is in that role that he is the target of barbs claiming that he was hostile to popular rule due to various features he or his colleagues inserted into the Constitution. These barbs usually point in two directions—toward Madison’s theory of the extended republic that makes it difficult for majorities to form and sustain themselves; and

toward his defense of the separation of powers under the Constitution that supposedly works against majority rule and renders the federal government weak and ineffective.

These criticisms are either wrong or overstated in connection with Madison and the Founders, and by inference with the Constitution itself. From the beginning of his career during the revolutionary years, Madison expressed strong support for popular government and majority rule, because from a republican point of view there is no other objective standard to determine political legitimacy. While it is true that he disapproved of “populism” (as we call it today), he did so mainly because it threatened to discredit republicanism as a form of government by rendering it unstable and unreliable. Madison was concerned about the potential abuses of majority rule but not opposed to majority rule itself. According to Irving Brant, Madison’s biographer, Madison fought throughout his career for three great principles: a strong union of the states as the guardian of liberty; freedom of conscience and personal liberty; and a republican form of government, based broadly upon the will of the people. As Greg Weiner argues effectively in a recent book, *Madison’s Metronome: The Constitution, Majority Rule, and the Tempo of American Politics*, Madison strongly supported popular government and majority rule, but wished to slow down the tempo of national politics to provide space for reasoned deliberation. Madison surely agreed with Thomas Jefferson, who said in his first inaugural address, “though the will of the majority is to prevail in all cases, that will to be rightful must be reasonable.”

Madison and many of his political allies began their political careers during the years of the Revolution, most of them as members of the Continental Army or the Continental Congress, or as office holders of some kind under the continental government. It was in this way that the Revolution produced a division within the governing class of the new nation between those who experienced the war in various continental or national posts and those who fought the war in the state militias or devoted their careers to state or local of-

fices. The “nationalists” traveled abroad and up and down the continent conferring with colleagues from other states, while wrestling with national issues like taxation, foreign affairs, and overall military strategy. They were a relatively small but tightly knit group that included Madison (who served both in the Continental Congress and the Virginia legislature), Jefferson, Franklin, Adams, Hamilton, and, of course, General Washington. They disagreed then and later on many important issues, but they were of one mind about the fatal weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. After all, they were the ones who had struggled and largely failed to turn the continental system into an effective political force. They were the first to conceive of the United States as a nation in need of a government worthy of the name. Those who labored in the states came more slowly to this outlook. Most could not reconcile themselves to the concept of a strong national government located in a faraway capital.

Madison, along with several others of this national outlook, began to press in the mid-1780s for revisions in the Articles out of concern that the national union was too weak to sustain itself and, indeed, was on the verge of falling apart. In the aftermath of the Revolution, the states drafted and ratified constitutions that allocated the preponderance of power to the legislatures in keeping with the theory that the executive poses a threat to liberty and the legislature is the appropriate repository of popular power. By the mid-1780s, the various legislatures in the states were erecting trade barriers against neighboring states, issuing worthless paper currency, interfering with treaties with other nations, and allowing mobs to threaten courts of law—all of it under the banner of populism and popular rule. In addition, those legislatures withheld taxes and revenues due to the Continental government, thereby weakening it further and leaving it vulnerable to possible attacks from European powers. One might describe this as the original “populist” moment in the history of the United States.

By 1787, the national group, led by Madison and Hamilton, persuaded the various legis-

latures to approve a national convention to meet in Philadelphia for the purpose of recommending revisions to the Articles. They also maneuvered in their respective states to win appointment as delegates to that convention.

In preparation for the convention in Philadelphia, Madison drafted a memorandum outlining the key weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and the features that he felt should be incorporated into a new framework of government. He saw two near-fatal defects in the Articles—first, that they relied upon the good will of the states to implement the policies or to collect the taxes approved by the Continental Congress, because the continental government possessed no powers to sanction recalcitrant states; second, the Articles required the approval of nine of the thirteen states before any policy could be carried into operation, thereby allowing a minority of states to veto measures approved by a majority. Both were features that tended to enfeeble the continental government—the first by making it impossible for the Congress to enforce its policies, the second by giving to a minority the power to stymie the operations of government. The minority veto he saw as a double-edged weapon that may have protected the minority but at the expense of paralyzing the government. When a few months later the convention discussed methods for ratifying the Constitution, he rejected proposals to require unanimous agreement from the states because, as he wrote in *Federalist* No. 40, it would be absurd to subject “the fate of twelve states to the perverseness or corruption of the thirteenth.”

Madison, working in league with other delegates, proposed to dispense entirely with the Articles of Confederation and to draft an completely new constitution for a strengthened national government. He arrived a week early in Philadelphia in May 1787 to plot strategy and to prepare for the task ahead. He used those days to draft his Virginia Plan, which he introduced early in the proceedings to serve as a template for discussion and debate over the form of the Constitution. His Virginia Plan was majoritarian or popular in character, in that it called for both houses in the legislature to be apportioned by population,

with elected members of the House of Representatives empowered to select members of the Senate, and then a group of Senators and Representatives in turn selecting the executive. This was in keeping with his theory that the national government should be based upon a representative body answerable to the people, with that body then selecting higher officers in the government. By that means he hoped to “refine” public opinion by using the popular branch as the basis for selecting the most able individuals to hold the higher posts in government. He lost those battles in the convention when the smaller states insisted upon an equal representation of the states in the Senate—a compromise that Madison saw as necessary to win support for the Constitution but also not entirely consistent with the principles of republican government. Still, as he saw it, the Constitution that emerged from the convention was a vast improvement over the Articles of Confederation.

With the drafting of the Constitution complete, Madison threw himself into the ratification process, with a focus on two key states—his home state of Virginia and New York. Opponents in his home state did all they could to deny him a seat in the ratifying convention in recognition of his mastery of the arguments for and against the proposed constitution. His eventual success in winning that seat was a critical step in the ratification fight, for, as his biographers agree, without Madison’s presence in the convention, the Constitution might easily have gone down to defeat in Virginia, and probably in other states, too.

During these months, Madison shuttled back and forth from his home in Virginia to New York City as a delegate to the Confederation Congress, which provided an opportunity to collaborate with Alexander Hamilton in the ratification debates in New York. Hamilton conceived of a plan to issue a series of essays to be published in a local newspaper answering critics of the Constitution and explicating its various controversial and unfamiliar features. The two men (with the initial help of John Jay) produced eighty-five essays between October

(1787) and June (1788), with Madison producing a third of them—often writing them as quickly as his publishers could set the type. Though the essays were published anonymously, most readers suspected that Hamilton and Madison were the true authors. Still, for that reason, no one knew at the time or for decades afterwards which man wrote which essays.

The essays proceeded according to Madison's analytical style. The papers are closely reasoned and answer objections raised by critics without resorting to personal attacks, overstatement, or hyperbole. Jefferson would later describe the *Federalist* as “the best commentary on the principles of government which ever was written.” With the *Federalist*, along with his *Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention*, Madison authored the two great commentaries on the federal Constitution.

It was in the *Federalist* that Madison authored his most influential essays—especially Numbers 10 and 51—outlining his theories of the extended republic and the separation of powers. These papers are notable for Madison's realism in incorporating conflicts of interest into the operations of government, somewhat in contrast to traditional theories of politics that tended to rely on the good will and virtue of participants. Madison's theories are thus modern in pointing toward self-interest as a principal motivation in politics and in harnessing conflicts of interest as instruments for arriving at the public good—somewhat parallel to Adam Smith's use of self-interest in his theory of free markets.

In *Federalist* 10 Madison addressed the issue that gave rise to the constitutional convention in the first place—the instability in the states due to powers given to the legislatures in the new state constitutions. There were many complaints, he noted, that governments are “too unstable,” and that “measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority.” The root cause of the problem was “faction,” which he defined as any group, amounting either to a majority or a minority, activated by some impulse of passion adverse to the rights of others of to “the permanent and

aggregate interests of the community.” Since factions cannot be eliminated short of destroying the freedom that gives rise to them, the only solution is to find some means of keeping them in check and limiting the damage they can do. If a faction amounts to a minority of the whole, then, as Madison argues, they can be checked in a popular system by resort to elections and majority rule. But when a faction amounts to a majority, the form of popular government permits it to have its way at the expense of the public good or the rights of the minority. As he developed his argument, it was clear that Madison was worried mostly about factions of interest rather than of passion, and particularly those that pitted the poor against the rich with an eye to redistributing wealth and property.

This, then, was the basic challenge the Constitution addressed—“to secure the public good and private rights against the danger of such a (majority) faction and at the same time to preserve the spirit and form of popular government.”

In providing his solution, Madison, perhaps with some help from David Hume, turned on its head the anti-federalist claim that popular governments can operate effectively only in cities or in small territories where the people can form close bonds with representatives. Hume had argued in “The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth” (1752) that though it is difficult to set up a republican government in a large territory “there is more facility, when once it is formed, of preserving it steady and uniform without tumult and faction.” In a large territory, as Hume argued, “the parts are so distant and remote, that it is very difficult, either by intrigue, prejudice, or passion, to hurry them into any measures against the public interest.”

Madison's argument, as the late Douglas Adair pointed out, runs parallel to Hume's. While majority factions may run amok in a city or a small territory, they are less likely either to form or to win power in a large system made up of many subordinate parts. “Extend the sphere,” Madison wrote, “and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the

whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens.” But even if such a common motive could be found, the faction would have difficulty communicating it to like-minded citizens across a large system. Thus, he argued that the extended republic formed by the union of the states had an advantage over the individual states in controlling the effects of majority factions. This, he wrote, represented a “republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government.”

The extended republic, strictly speaking, is not a republican remedy in that it relies upon the expansion of territory and the multiplication of interests (and not representation, *per se*) to discipline majority factions. Madison certainly had in mind the concept of limited government when he articulated this idea, because the extended republic would prevent government from acting except in rare occasions in which a national consensus could form, organize, and win power. Critics over the years have pointed out that while Madison may have preserved the spirit and form of popular government, his solution effectively dispensed with the actuality of popular rule. Yet the critics miss Madison’s main point—which was to design a popular system that tended to temper and slow down the operations of government in order to allow opportunities for deliberation and debate. Determined majorities might still govern, but in the extended republic they would have to sustain themselves across a broad territory and through several election cycles.

There is an influential critique of Madison that suggests that, if the extended republic is effective in preventing tyranny of the majority, then the separation of powers into three competing departments of government is redundant and unnecessary. Yet the separation of powers in the Constitution was not designed principally to discipline majorities but rather as an instrument to force government to control itself. It was an accepted principle at that time—and remains so today—that the concentration of all powers into a single person or department is the very definition of tyranny. The separation of powers into different and conflicting departments—executive, judicial,

and legislative—is the foundation for the rule of law as an alternative to arbitrary power. As Madison argued in *Federalist* 51, “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.” The separation of powers was a device to prevent tyranny, and operated on the basis of conflict out of which something akin to the public interest was expected to emerge.

As Madison wrote, “the policy of supplying by opposite and rival interests the defect of better motives might be traced through the whole system of human affairs, private as well as public . . . the constant aim is to divide and arrange the several offices in such a manner as that each may be a check on the other.” But it is true, to give critics their due, that the separation of powers does to some extent discipline majorities by forcing them to win control of all three branches in order to impose their will, though it is also true that disciplined minorities also face the same challenge. As with the extended republic, the separation of powers tends to slow down the operations of government to permit deliberation.

Madison may have been too sanguine in his belief that the problem of minority faction can be readily taken care of by an appeal to the ballot box. In the first decade following the ratification of the Constitution, Madison and Jefferson, along with many allies in the states, found themselves fighting against Hamilton’s commercial program that relied on government borrowing, a national bank, subsidies and tariffs to aid commercial enterprises, support for Great Britain in her wars against France, and loose construction of the Constitution. Madison, taking up his pen against Hamilton, accused the Federalists of trying to organize the new republic on the model of Great Britain and by building support through office seekers and corrupt bribes through the operations of the Bank of the United States. In order to make their opposition effective, Jefferson and Madison saw that they would have to build an opposition party based upon the voters in the states to oppose

the schemes of consolidation taking place in the Capitol. Their party—the Democratic-Republican Party—succeeded in winning the contested election of 1800, along with the next five presidential elections through 1820, thereby providing the instrument for that durable majority that Madison felt was necessary to permit a majority to govern. In the process, they also created the needful instrument (the mass political party) for the expression of populist impulses.

In 1836, Madison was in the final year of his life, and as he noted in one of his letters, he was the last surviving member of Constitutional Convention of 1787 and of the Virginia Assembly that in 1777 approved the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. “Having outlived so many of my contemporaries,” he wrote, “I ought not to forget that I may be thought to have outlived myself.”

He had been born a British subject and had survived nearly through the administration of Andrew Jackson, the populist president who resurrected the Democratic Party as an instrument for majority rule. Alexis de Tocqueville had only just the year before published the first volume of *Democracy in America*, the widely-read work that declared that, notwithstanding the Constitution, democracy and majority rule had won the battle in America against the rule of aristocracy and elites. John C. Calhoun, Jackson’s Vice-President, would concur disapprovingly a few years later in *A Disquisition on Government*, where he argued that majority tyranny is inevitable in any system of popular government. A majority, he argued *contra* Madison, will eventually discover itself in any popular system, and when it does it will approve measures for taxes and regulation that will be oppressive to minorities. Calhoun, who in those years flirted with nullification

and secession, favored a system that would permit influential minorities to veto measures supported by majorities.

As his health declined in that final year of his life, Madison had every reason to think that his constitutional measures for regulating factions had failed in the face of the populist resurgence of the Jackson years, the rise of sectionalism, and the general movement in America at that time toward the equality of condition. Yet, given the views he expressed in the letters he wrote at this time, Madison did not seem especially worried about majority tyranny, populism, or the capacity of the Constitution to deal with those particular challenges. He feared instead that his extended republic might fall victim to the centrifugal forces of secession and disunion. In 1834, knowing that the end was not far off, he wrote a letter titled “Advice to My Country,” to be opened and published only after his death. “The advice nearest to my heart and deepest in my convictions,” he wrote,

is that the Union of the States be cherished & perpetuated. Let the open enemy to it be regarded as a Pandora with her box opened; and the disguised one, as the Serpent creeping with his deadly wiles into Paradise.

Those fears proved prescient at the time: the generation of leaders that followed disregarded his advice and interpreted the outcome of one election in 1860 as a signal to break up the union. Who knows?—Madison’s advice may yet be pertinent today. The Constitution by its design can handle threats of populism and majority tyranny. Its undoing—should that ever happen—will come from other sources. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, emancipated from the perfervid imagination of the media, can rest easily.

Introduction: free speech & the academy

by Roger Kimball

“Shut up,” he explained.

—Ring Lardner

What socialism implies above all is keeping account of everything.

—V. I. Lenin

Regular readers, absorbing the title of this special section, may wonder whether they have wandered into that realm of *déjà-vu* all over again to which the philosopher Yogi Berra alluded. “Free Speech & the Academy” sounds a lot like “Free Speech under Threat,” the subject of our symposium two years ago.

Appearances do not always deceive. We are once again laboring in those fecund if weed-strewn fields where language, law, politics, and dissimulation contend under the mournful gaze of exiled truth. Indeed, careful readers will note that at least since 2008, when we published a special pamphlet on “Free Speech in an Age of Jihad,” assaults on free speech

have occupied a prominent and regular place in our reflections.

As with the House of the Lord, however, the abridgement of free speech has many mansions. In January 2015, we considered a broad range of threats against free speech, prominently including the threat posed by the rise of Islamic ideology in Western societies. Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Western societies have—had?—sought to forestall the sanguinary hecatombs of religious wars by substituting state for religious sovereignty in the sublunary world of political affairs. How strange, then, to find ourselves in the opening decades of the twenty-first century once again conjuring with demands for the reimposition of laws against blasphemy.

Some of these demands are frankly religious, or at least theocratic, in origin, as in the tireless campaigns undertaken to promulgate laws against blasphemy by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, representing fifty-six Muslim countries and the Palestinian Authority, in the United Nations and other organs of transnational progressivism.

Other interdictions against “blasphemy” are of a more secular, but no less dogmatic, character, as in the strictures against so-called “hate speech” on campus and anywhere else that political correctness triumphs. The United States must “get tough on hate speech through the law,” wrote the feminist commentator Tanya Cohen in a much-cited essay a few years back. Note the phrase “through the law.” Under the category of “hate speech,”

“Free Speech & the Academy: How Left-Wing Censorship Is Threatening to Destroy Our Universities,” a symposium organized jointly by *The New Criterion* and London’s Social Affairs Unit, took place on September 30, 2016 in Winchester, England. Participants were Michael Auslin, Nigel Biggar, Jeremy Black, Peter Bonilla, Anthony Daniels, Christie Davies, Dominic Green, Daniel Johnson, Roger Kimball, Noel Malcolm, Andrew C. McCarthy, Michael Mosbacher, Caroline Potter, Eric C. Simpson, Oliver Wiseman, and Peter W. Wood. Discussion revolved around earlier versions of the essays printed in this special section.

Cohen aggregated speech that “offends or insults in general, along with speech that voices approval of anti-democratic, anti-freedom, and/or totalitarian ideologies and propaganda for war.” That’s quite a list. How would “the law” handle such torts? Like this: as I write, the Dutch politician Geert Wilders has just been convicted of (as *The New York Times* reports it) “inciting discrimination and of insulting a group for saying that the Netherlands would be safer with fewer Moroccans.” Think about that.

This year, conjuring with assaults against free speech in the academy, our focus is in some ways narrower. But since universities and their attendant institutions are defined by their commitment to the pursuit of truth, the assault on free speech in those precincts reveals with particular clarity what is at stake. By subordinating truth to the requirements of an ideological agenda (what lit-crit types call “discourse” or “narrative”), the assault on free speech in the academy is at the same time an assault on freedom of thought and, beyond that, an assault on political freedom *tout court*. Hence the vertiginous irony that behind leftist calls to “speak truth to power” is the corrosive assumption that truth is always and everywhere relative to power (except of course in the categorical assertion that “truth is relative to power”). It’s nice work if you can get it.

In essentials, the subordination of truth to “narrative” rests upon a contradiction as old as Protagoras and Thrasymachus. Nor is it any more cogent for being updated in the forbidding argot of Foucault and his heirs. Taken together, the following essays offer a sort of fever chart or participant observer’s report on this pathology of truth in contemporary intellectual life. Some of the essays, like Andrew C. McCarthy’s reflection on the baneful influence of Edward Said, dilate on the central mendacity at the heart of political correctness: the demonization of reason itself as “a malevolent [i.e., non-progressive] force.” Other essays delve into particular manifestations of the disease. Peter Wood, the President of the National Association of Scholars, provides a compendium of various ways in which

free speech is curtailed on campus, while Peter Bonilla, from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, shows how the integrity of faculty research has been inverted, turned upside down, by an increasing subservience to forces outside and alien to the canons of scholarly endeavor. Dominic Green anatomizes the “BDS” (for “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions”) movement against the state of Israel, while Nigel Biggar rehearses the failed campaign to remove a statue of the great philanthropist Cecil Rhodes from an Oxford College that was a conspicuous beneficiary of his largesse.

The pressure of academic political correctness against truth is not confined to the classroom or to campus life, as Anthony Daniels shows in his discussion of “medical correctness” in the pages of such premier medical journals as *The New England Journal of Medicine* and *The Lancet*. Daniels acknowledges that medicine might at first glance seem to be an unpromising discipline for subversion by political correctness. The visceral reality of illness is naturally resistant to ideological remediation. An aching stomach is not soothed by correct opinions about race, gender, or capitalist exploitation. Nevertheless, as Daniels shows, medicine, though initially recalcitrant, has turned out to be a field “ripe for political correctness.” Medicine may have come late to the party, but it has made up for its tardiness by embracing political correctness “with the zeal of the late convert.” Consider, to take just one example, an article published on Bastille Day of 2016 and entitled “Beyond Bathrooms—Meeting the Health Needs of Transgender People.” The bits of this essay that Daniels quotes show beyond doubt that it is a masterpiece of minatory absurdity and virtue signaling.

To the public at large, the cavalcade of politically correct nonsense on college campuses seems preposterous but mostly silly. The recent influx of infantilization—the demand for “safe spaces” and “trigger warnings” against upsetting ideas, the warnings against “micro-aggressions” and other upsetting facts of life—add a surrealistic overlay to the grim comedy. But Daniel Johnson’s look back at what happened to the German university in the 1930s shows that political correctness can be some-

thing much more serious. “The story of this self-immolation is salutary for us,” Johnson writes,

because, though we know how the story of the German university ended, we do not know how far the betrayal of science and the humanities with which we are now confronted almost daily in our own academic institutions may yet have to go. Perhaps only the prospect of the catastrophe that a century ago befell some of the world’s greatest centers of learning—a catastrophe from which they have even now not fully recovered—will bring today’s intelligentsia to its senses.

Perhaps. There are, here and there, some signs that the adamantine carapace of political correctness is cracking under the weight of its own absurdity. But I have been saying that at least since 1987 when Allan Bloom’s book *The Closing of the American Mind* fired the first salvo against this phenomenon of mendacious self-indulgence. Hitherto, anyway, the “some signs” have signaled but local disturbances in the progress of the Leviathan of political correctness. For every salutary upsurge of sanity—for example, the University of Chicago’s recent announcement that its campus was *not* a “safe space” or romper room for snowflakes more interested in savoring their own sense of virtue than learning about the world—there are a dozen Yales and Amhersts and Williams Colleges utterly beholden to the agenda of politically correct orthodoxy.

Still, reality itself is finally the great obstacle to the definitive triumph of political correctness. Which is why Andrew McCarthy was right to zero in on the extent to which the partisans of political correctness attack not just particular points of view but ultimately reason itself. Reason, whose procedures provide mankind with its primary key to the discernment of reality, is a suspect force. If the party line holds that two plus two equals five, but reason tells us that the correct answer is four, then it is reason which must yield. Hence it is, as McCarthy notes, that “The censors are not just destroying our universities. They are destroying what makes the West the West.”

As readers of *Nineteen Eighty-four* will recall, I take that arithmetical example from Orwell’s great dystopian novel. “Freedom,” the book’s

unhappy hero Winston writes early on in the novel, “is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted all else follows.” But it is exactly that freedom—the freedom of the independent operation of reason—that Big Brother interdicts. Like Lenin years earlier, Big Brother is everywhere. There is no detail of life too small to escape his scrutiny and control. All of one’s behavior, even one’s thoughts, belong to him. Thus it is that at the end of the novel, his spirit broken, Winston sits in a café tracing the equation “two plus two equals five.”

The chief instrument for the enforcement of conformity—at the end of the day, it is even more potent than the constant threat of terror—is language, the perfection and dissemination of Newspeak, that insidious pseudo-language that aims to curtail rather than liberate thought and feeling. “The purpose of Newspeak,” Orwell writes, “was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc [English Socialism, i.e., the existing regime], but to make all other modes of thought impossible.”

It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all . . . a heretical thought . . . should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. . . .

This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever. . . . Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum. . . . [I]n Newspeak the expression of unorthodox opinions, above a very low level, was well-nigh impossible.

Orwell intended *Nineteen Eighty-four* as a warning, an admonition. Our academic social justice warriors, supposing they are even aware of Orwell’s work, would seem to regard it as a plan of action. It was to shine some light into those tenebrous caverns of orthodoxy that we convened this symposium on free speech and the academy.

Anti-knowledge is power

by Andrew C. McCarthy

What has defined the West is the convergence between Rome and Athens. Pope Benedict XVI related the phenomenon in his memorable 2006 Regensburg lecture. The “inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry” ultimately “created Europe and remains the foundation of what rightly can be called Europe.” It is what makes the West, the West.

The core of this convergence is reason. It is reason, of course, that makes possible human flourishing through the acquisition and development of knowledge. The admonition in commerce and governance that executives and officials must “think outside the box” has nearly achieved bromide status. But it is the most sound of principles. “The box” constitutes our premises, what the former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—with the humility one must have in the puzzling field of intelligence analysis—would presume to call the “known knowns.” Because knowledge itself constantly reminds us that our knowledge is apt to be imperfect, we frequently need to challenge our basic assumptions in order to solve the vexing problem or find the next Information Age innovation. That is why progress requires reason.

It is one of those cruel ironies that one regularly encounters in political discourse, then, that our society’s forces of anti-reason are known as “progressives”—proving yet again the wisdom in George Orwell’s observation that “the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.”

They are winning, which in the context of this conference is illustrated by left-wing censorship’s destruction of our universities. Free speech, the vehicle of reason, is increasingly overwhelmed by *narrative*, the most potent weapon in the social justice warrior’s arsenal. Today, anti-knowledge is power.

Pope Benedict’s brilliant dilation on faith and reason at Regensburg became most notable—some said “notorious”—for its fleeting reference to the centrality of *jihad* (holy war) to the Medinan phase of Islam’s development. The Medina transition is worth pondering.

In the earlier, Meccan phase, “when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat,” the pontiff recalled, he sought to call Arabs to the new faith through peaceful persuasion. This is reflected in benign scripture, such as the directive in sura 2:256: “There is no compulsion in religion.” Yet, after the *hijra*, the flight of the first Muslims to Medina under siege, the faith and its scriptures turned bellicose. Nearly seven centuries later, this prompted the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologus (the key figure in the vignette described by the pope) to seethe: “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”

Benedict was at pains to point out that there is “a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable” in this sweeping denunciation. As Robert R. Reilly recounts in *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual*

Suicide Created the Current Islamist Crisis, the creed that relied on—and, indeed, to this day practices—jihad also featured a Hellenistic tradition that spawned Avicenna and Averroes. Nevertheless, Paleologus was getting at a fundamental truth: reason is God’s nature, while coercion, particularly through violence, is incompatible with God’s nature. Consequently, Benedict elaborated, to lead another to faith, one “needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly.”

Appeals to reason are all well and good, for even the mind of a captive is free to reason and make choices. But those choices can be confined. That does not happen in the West, or at least it did not until recent times, because here the rule of reason avails us of infinite choices. Reason, though, is very far from the most common guide for ruling societies.

Without apology, Islam spread by military conquest because the predominant conception of Allah was defined by *will*, not reason. In fact, Reilly demonstrates, the internecine theological debates of the Ninth through Eleventh Centuries—a time in which sharia, Islamic law, was etched in stone—gradually and quite intentionally eradicated reason as a component of faith. In their radical voluntarism (the understanding of God as pure will), Islam’s most influential thinkers held that Allah is the primary cause of everything (there are no secondary causes), and thus rejected as blasphemous the notion that the divine is rational by nature—that there were rules of logic, discernible by man, to which Allah is bound to conform.

This tradition, which is the backbone of modern Islamic supremacism, did not so much refute as refine the Koran’s directive that “there is no compulsion in religion.” Even jihadists deny that they demand conversion by force. What they require, instead, is submission to the authority of the caliphate, the Islamic state (there being no division of political and spiritual life in this classical construction of Islam). This is consistent with Allah’s injunction (in sura 9:29):

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath

been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion Of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *jizya* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

The *jizya* is a poll tax required to be paid by infidels for the privilege of living under the protection of the Islamic state. Historically, it was a not insignificant stream of revenue for Muslim rulers. Hence, the objective of the state was gradual conversion, not immediate forcible conversion.

The Islamist scheme for achieving such conversions is our focus. While people are not compelled to convert, it is mandatory to accept the sharia system of governance. This system is totalitarian in the sense that it aspires to control over all aspects of political, economic, and social life. And remorselessly so: Allah—pure will—has gifted mankind with sharia (Arabic for “the path”) as His prescription for how life is to be lived; thus, there can be no more profound offense than failure to comply.

Again, sharia does not require one’s affirmation of Islam, a grudging recognition of the reality that there is no real acceptance of a religious doctrine under coercion. Crucially, however, sharia tightly regulates both speech and the outward manifestations of adherence to other religions. Any form of expression that subjects Allah or the prophet to criticism, casts Muslims in a poor light, or sows discord in the *ummah* (the Islamic community) is considered blasphemous and brutally punished—incarceration, scourging, and even death, depending on the gravity of the offense (or the thin skin of the offended). Moreover, publicly practicing non-Muslim religious rites, displaying non-Muslim religious iconography, non-Muslim proselytizing, and even maintaining non-Muslim houses of worship as they inevitably fall into disrepair are forbidden.

The idea is to confine the captive’s choices. Although one is nominally “free” to believe what one chooses to believe, the world of available choices inexorably narrows along with the parameters of acceptable discourse. In the end, everyone comes around to the good sense of converting to Islam—no compulsion, of

course, just “guidance.” And once one is in the fold, it is forever: apostasy from Islam is a capital offense, and if territory comes under Muslim control, even briefly, it is deemed Islam’s forever, triggering the obligation of “defensive” jihad if it is invaded or occupied.

All of this traces from the triumph of will over reason. Paradoxically, believers rationalize irrationality as righteous because it is commanded by Allah. They see themselves as operatives of the “Religion of Truth.” With truth being strictly the product of revelation, not logical inquiry, reason is viewed as a malevolent force: a man-made, Jesuitical pretext for diverting from Allah’s law.

The very pursuit of knowledge is thus portrayed as an act of aggression.

This totalitarian zeitgeist is not unique to Islamic fundamentalism. It is found throughout academia today. Still, it is enlightening—if dark—to explore it through the prism of modern Islamism, for it is the juncture where sharia supremacists unite with their fellow statists on the political left. The seminal figure in this partnership, and in the modern program of Middle East Studies, was Edward Said.

The study of Middle Eastern history and Islamic civilization is a venerable discipline. Today, it seems a vestige of a bygone time, when the designations “Orientalist” and “Islamist” referred to subject-matter expertise, not political activism or radicalism. Middle East Studies today, by contrast, is political dogma masquerading as academic discipline. Its core mission, with Professor Said at the helm, was to slander knowledge itself.

As Joshua Muravchik explained in an incisive profile, Said’s animating theory held that “knowledge” was the key that enabled the West to dominate Orientals: the point of pursuing knowledge about “the languages, culture, history, and sociology of societies of the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent,” Said elaborated, was to gain more control over the “subject races” by making “their management easy and profitable.” With real study caricatured as the engine of colonial exploitation, the way was paved for a competing construction of “study”—political

agitation to empower the have-nots in the struggle against the haves.

Said was a fitting pioneer for such a fraud. To begin with, he was a professor not of Middle East Studies but of comparative literature. Moreover, the personal history he touted to paper over his want of credentials was sheer fiction: far from what he purported to be (a Palestinian victim exiled by Jews from his Jerusalem home at age twelve), Said was actually a child of privilege, raised in Cairo and educated in top British and American schools. His Palestinian tie of note was membership in the PLO’s governing council. Like Rashid Khalidi—his protégé, who was later awarded the chair in Modern Arab Studies that Columbia University named in Said’s honor—Said was a reliable apologist of Yassir Arafat, the indefatigable terrorist who infused Palestinian identity with a Soviet-backed Arab nationalism.

To thrive in an Islamic culture, it was not only useful but necessary for Palestinian militancy to accommodate the Islamist sense of divine injunction to wage jihad. From its roots, then, modern Middle East Studies is a political movement aligning leftism and sharia supremacism under the guise of an academic discipline. It is not an objective quest for learning guided by a rich corpus of history and culture; it is a project to impose its pieties as incontestable truth—and to discredit dispassionate analysis in order to achieve that end.

The embrace of Islamism usefully advances this project because, as we have seen, sharia supremacism stigmatizes reason and the pursuit of knowledge. It is thus innately antagonistic to the West that Pope Benedict limned as the convergence of religion and philosophical inquiry. For the Islamist, what the West calls “reason” or “the objective pursuit of knowledge” is merely a rationalization for supplanting Allah’s design with the corrupting preferences of Western civilization.

We see how this teaching plays out in practice. Muslim countries that supplement sharia with other legislation add the caveat that no man-made law may contradict Islamic principles. As we’ve seen with the “sharia democracy” constitutions drafted for Afghanistan and Iraq, the authoritarian Islamic law tenets

effectively nullify the human-rights tropes. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation—a group of Islamic governments that form a large bloc in the United Nations—even found it necessary in 1990 to promulgate a Declaration of Human Rights in Islam because Islamists could not accept the Universal Declaration of Human Rights spearheaded by non-Muslim governments after World War II. The latter (however flawed it may be) is emblematic of rational, humanist progress; the former is the product of immovable revelation.

The Muslim Brotherhood, the world's most influential Islamist organization, has grown an impressive infrastructure in the United States and Western Europe since the middle of the last century. In laying the groundwork, it gave pride of place to an ostensibly academic enterprise, the International Institute of Islamic Thought. The IIIT, a regular sponsor and supporter of Middle East Studies programs, is quite explicit in describing its mandate—on its website and in its literature—as “the Islamization of knowledge.” This, straightforwardly, means the weaving of historical events and cultural developments into Islamist *narratives* that confirm sharia-supremacist tenets.

The word “narratives” is highlighted advisedly. When a culture is (or becomes) remote from reason, when it regards the pursuit of knowledge with suspicion, it inevitably prizes story-telling over fact. Facts, what we seek in the pursuit of knowledge, push us to think outside the box, to challenge our premises, to examine dogma rather than uncritically conforming to it. They are unwelcome in a totalitarian environment, where distinguishing “us” from “them” takes precedence over sorting out right from wrong.

It is the narrative, not the facts, that dictates what is right. And in this, the West increasingly mimics the IIIT, with knowledge contorted in the service of leftist tenets.

In the United States, there has been a spate of anti-police riots and protests since August 9, 2014, when Michael Brown was killed in a confrontation with police in Ferguson, Missouri. The decedent is studiously depicted by the left-leaning mainstream media as an

“unarmed African-American teenager,” which is true (if truth matters even a little) in only the sparsest sense. Mr. Brown was a giant eighteen-year-old who had just robbed a convenience store (bullying the manager) when he was confronted by Officer Darren Wilson, who realized that Brown matched the radio dispatcher's description of the thief. Brown assaulted Wilson through the latter's squad car, attempting to seize Wilson's firearm, which fired during the struggle. Brown fled, but when he realized Wilson was pursuing, he turned and bull-rushed the officer, who shot and killed him.

There is no doubt that this is what happened. The facts were diligently pieced together through the testimony of numerous eyewitnesses, video recordings, and forensic examination. That, however, did not cause the racial grievance industry a moment's hesitation. A legend was instantly peddled that Brown, looking forward to starting college, became alarmed upon a chance encounter with a menacing cop; he turned and tried to get away, but raised his arms in the air when told to stop, only to have the rogue officer shoot him in the back.

“Hands Up, Don't Shoot!” has thus become the rally cry of a fraudulent but highly effective movement. The slogan festoons shirts and placards. It is acted out in public displays (including by five professional football players in a pregame demonstration before a sizable television audience). It is the foundation of a narrative that the nation's police are preying on young black men, who are shot at and imprisoned at a rate wildly disproportionate to their percentage of the overall population.

It could not be more manifest that this narrative is an enormous, slanderous lie. In 2015, twice as many whites as blacks were killed in police interactions. As Heather Mac Donald notes, only four percent of black homicide victims are killed in police-involved incidents; the overwhelming majority die in black-on-black violence. Furthermore, the nation's police departments have never been more integrated: many of the police involved in violent altercations with black men have themselves been black.

Nevertheless, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” remains the catalyst for continuing outbreaks of violence, especially in the aftermath of altercations between police and criminals. It is also driving national policy, in which a derivative fiction—viz., that the jails are teeming with non-violent drug felons—is driving Washington toward “criminal justice reform.” This bipartisan initiative aims to scale back Reagan-era narcotics-trafficking and sentencing laws, which—in conjunction with innovative, intelligence-based policing—contributed to a historic decrease in violent crime. That is, it would reverse what gave us domestic tranquility and propelled a renaissance in major American cities.

Again, none of the narrative is true. The federal prison population has plummeted significantly. (President Obama has made prodigious use of his pardon pen to commute felony sentences, and promises much more of the same before he leaves office in January.) Only rarely does the Justice Department prosecute mere possession of illegal drugs, and felons sentenced to significant jail time tend to be repeat recidivists affiliated with violent conspiracies.

No matter: the narrative must be served. Murder is up sharply in American cities (not yet near its historic highs a generation ago, but the trend is alarming). Drug abuse, particularly heroin consumption, is rampant, reaching crisis proportions in some places. But these are facts. Facts no longer have much currency.

It was in the Islamic academy that will and dogma snuffed out reason and knowledge. It is in the American academy that Islamic supremacists found a home—the first building block of the Muslim Brotherhood’s American network was the Muslim Students Association, which now sports hundreds of chapters throughout the United States and Canada. The academy was especially hospitable to Edward Said and the campaign to substitute political activism for scholarship, and thus to override knowledge with narrative. And it is the academy that has become ground-zero for the assault on reason, using the totalitarian’s playbook of strangling free speech and tolerating liberty only in the ever-narrower corridors between its “safe spaces.”

The censors are not just destroying our universities. They are destroying what makes the West the West.

Seven types of suppression

by Peter W. Wood

The implacable determination of today's campus enforcers of conventional opinion is nowhere better illustrated than in the rise of BERTS—Bias Education Response Teams. These are administrative bodies now common at colleges and universities that stand ready to swing into action at the drop of a gender-insensitive pronoun. BERTS are empowered to seek out and torment alleged malefactors; to comfort the afflicted; and to raise alarm throughout the community when its norms have been transgressed.

BERTS enforce not justice in the plain old sense, but the marvelously flexible concept of “social justice.” And social justice authorizes seven types of suppression of free speech. To keep these seven in good marching order, I propose the mnemonic OUTRAGE: ostracize, usurp, train, repress, aggress, group, and exalt.

Ostracize those who dissent from political orthodoxy; *usurp* the curriculum; *train* students to be activists; *repress* topics that are ruled unfit for discussion; *aggress* against anyone and any custom that embodies the old order; *group* people by race, sex, and ethnicity into categories stigmatized as privileged or celebrated as oppressed; and *exalt* certain ideas and beliefs so that they are exempt from questioning or critical examination, while expressions of dissent can be suppressed as acts of malignity.

Ostracize

Ostracism is most visible in the disinventions sent to famous and sometimes not-so-famous people. But the more profound forms of ostracism

are the invitations never sent in the first place and the culling from the candidates for graduate programs and faculty positions of anyone suspected of harboring views judged to be conservative. The disinvented now number well over one hundred, and include figures such as Henry Kissinger, Laura Bush, Michelle Malkin, Pat Buchanan, Lawrence Summers, David Horowitz, Daniel Pipes, James Watson, Ray Kelly, Ben Carson, Peter Thiel, Robert Birgeneau, Christine Lagarde, Condoleezza Rice, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, among many others.

Usurp

The great usurpation in higher education consists of cancelling courses and programs that run against the progressive narrative. Suppression of ideas through curricular changes is far from the most visible form of campus censorship but it may be among the most consequential. Perhaps the best known case was the decision by Stanford University in 1988 to abolish its great books-based Western Culture requirement. Stanford adopted in its place a grab bag of courses called “Culture, Ideas, and Values”—the acronym CIV neatly lampooning the old regime.

The displacement of the old curriculum, of course, goes back further. The signal year was 1969 when liberal arts colleges in large numbers across the country abruptly began to demolish what remained of common core requirements in favor of radically elective programs in which students could choose most,

or in some cases all, of their own courses. The National Association of Scholars documented this disestablishment at one college in *What Does Bowdoin Teach?* At the time, Bowdoin had a newly appointed president who enunciated that nothing at the college would rest on mere tradition, and a coherent liberal arts education would take shape for each student in a different way as it “emerged” from his increasingly sophisticated choices. The student would gain some help with this from the earnest involvement of faculty advisors, but the faculty itself would be liberated from teaching the same old, same old. Henceforth they would be cutting-edge academic specialists and would teach whatever parts of their specializations they chose. Bowdoin invited and received curricular chaos.

This is now the national model, and only a handful of colleges offer more than token resistance, though a great many disguise the absence of a coherent curriculum by a scrim called “distribution requirements.” The banishing of core curricula, however, was not the dawn of a new age of intellectual freedom. In its place rose a form of ideological tyranny far more limiting than any core liberal arts program. The term “liberal arts” itself was captured and defined, along with such seemingly impregnable concepts such as “great books” and “core texts.” These days, such words are as likely to point to Frankfurt School Marxism, radical feminism, postmodernism, the diversity movement, and the sustainability movement, as they are to Plato and Shakespeare.

Train

Training is what colleges and universities do to turn students into community organizers and social activists. This project is widespread and seldom reported, but it has become central to what our erstwhile institutions of higher learning now do. This training typically takes the form of marshalling freshmen into “volunteer” programs—“voluntaryranny” as some students describe it—which begin with simple and wholesome tasks like picking up litter and ladling out soup and gradually ramp up all the way to organizing mass protest.

The threat to free speech in this training regimen comes early and often. I first ran into it at the University of Delaware in 2008, where it looked at first to be straightforward indoctrination of students in the dorms on matters such as racism (all whites are inherently racist; blacks cannot be racist by definition) and same-sex marriage (those not in favor are literally remanded for “treatment”). But on digging deeper, the indoctrination was simply a warm-up to persuading students that the better part of their university education would come from the “co-curricular” activities in which they would learn to be agents of social transformation.

I asked, “How many Delawares?” and the answer has turned out to be that Delaware-style activist training is pretty much standard on college campuses. The reason why so many students these days see no appeal in our institutions of self-government and regard “free speech” itself as a trap is that they have been immersed in this Alinskyite sub-curriculum from the moment they enrolled.

The exquisite sensitivity of today’s college students to hidden bias is not something that just happened. Such sensitivity has to be cultivated and encouraged. BERTS are one way to do that, but another is what my colleague Ashley Thorne calls “staged emergencies and planned panics.” These are events in the life of the college when everything stops because someone has reported a possible hate crime or a bias incident that, were it an earthquake, would be an eight on the Richter scale. Ashley’s article about this cites examples from several colleges and universities, but the most memorable is surely the 2013 emergency at Oberlin College. A student in the middle of the night spotted a person dressed as a Ku Klux Klansman walking through campus. The report quickly reached the college president who did not hesitate to cancel classes. Soon a rally was organized; student workers were excused from their jobs; a teach-in occurred; the Africana Studies department organized a march; and more. As it happened, there was no Klansman on the campus that night, but only a student wrapped in a blanket against the cold.

But it was clear that Oberlin knew how to respond if the emergency had been real. Bundled into the hysteria over the fictitious Klansman were expressions of outrage about racist graffiti that had appeared around campus over the course of a month. The Oberlin campus police had already identified the culprits, who had confessed: they were two pro-Obama students intent on tricking the college to see how it would react. The students had been suspended for the spring semester and the Oberlin administration knew all the details. But the administration decided to let the protests against the graffiti continue without informing the community of what had actually happened. The facts came out months later when an enterprising writer for the website *The Daily Caller* broke the story. The Oberlin administration responded by claiming that its silence was an honorable attempt to help the community learn: “Those actions were real. The fear and disruption they caused in our community were real.”

Repress

It is never enough for the left to prevent an idea from being heard. The deeper goal is to get students to repress the thought that there may be some validity in that idea. Curiosity must be buttoned down. Wondering about the validity of a favored doctrine is evidence of unreliability.

The outstanding examples of this repression are climate change and rape culture. When it comes to the questions of whether the burning of fossil fuels by humans is substantially increasing the earth’s temperature, whether such increases in temperature are likely to be catastrophic, and whether there are measures that could be taken to forestall such global warming, American higher education speaks with one voice. It says those are not real questions. They are, instead, matters of “settled science.” And the only reason why someone would pretend to ask them as though they were real questions would be to create confusion and doubt. This is the “Merchants of Doubt” smear against anyone who expresses skepticism over any part of the anthropogenic catastrophic global warming thesis.

Having a thesis that is off-limits to reasonable inquiry and evidence does not seem to be a very good way to promote free speech on campus. In fact, the excessive force used by proponents of the thesis to secure their position strongly suggests an inner struggle to keep an orthodoxy alive despite growing doubts.

A similar situation confronts the many campus activists who assert that colleges and universities are host to a “rape culture.” There is simply no credible evidence for this claim, but it persists as an article of faith among campus feminists. It can be maintained only by repressing the questions as well as the discrepancies. Take, for example, the *Rolling Stone* article “A Rape on Campus,” by the journalist Sabrina Erdely. The readiness of many college officials to accept this false story at face value testifies to the will to believe and a determination not to be hindered by reasonable doubt.

Aggression

College officials realize that many students passively refuse to take up the cause of social activism or to become enthusiastic about the causes favored by the academic left. Administrators who owe their positions and careers to stoking grievances deplore this apathy and have aggressive techniques to force conformity. Required diversity training is one step in this direction; required sexual harassment training is another. But the stewards of the movement have a lot of time to devise more advanced forms of psychological manipulation. We should think of the many colleges that now attempt to get their students to commit themselves to reducing their carbon footprints. My colleague Rachelle Person has written about the rise of environmental “nudging” on campus, such as removing trays from cafeterias or banning bottled water on campus: petty annoyances that are meant to force students to think dozens of times a day about the need to live a green lifestyle.

The newest form of leftist aggression is to accuse those who do not positively join the left of “micro-aggression.” This is a nice inversion of reality. Your resistance to my aggression is micro-aggression.

This doctrine has the active encouragement and participation of college administrations. Recently, Northwestern University President Morton Schapiro greeted freshmen with a speech in which he denounced critics of safe spaces and trigger warnings as “lunatics.” Schapiro explained that microaggressions “cut you to the core” and are a threat to the well-being of Northwestern students, and he offered help for students seeking “safe spaces.”

President Schapiro no doubt saw a market opportunity to present Northwestern as safe for safe-space cadets and, to the easily triggered, friendly to trigger-warnings. That marketing appeal, however, teaches students to shun confrontation with unfamiliar ideas. It is part of the acid that corrodes free speech, because free speech is inevitably unsafe, unpredictable, and likely to upset speech.

Group

The G in OUTRAGE stands for group, which is shorthand for the identity politics that the academic left has fused to everything in higher education. If a matter can be reduced to the coordinates of race, class, and gender, it will be. If it cannot, the activists will try anyway. Who set the standards for standard temperature and pressure anyway? Some white male?

The doctrines of diversity and multiculturalism have whetted an appetite for power and privilege in the name of social justice. Free speech is a particular casualty of campus identity politics. Open discussion of race, sex, Western civilization, and myriad other subjects is rendered impossible by the readiness of the professional guardians of these topics to punish anyone who voices a dissenting view.

Exalt

The left now exalts in outright ideological imposition. Something of the sort is implicit in the way global warming and rape culture are treated, and also in the idea that Western civilization is racist and oppressive. The exalted idea need never be argued, but it can be endlessly illustrated, and thus higher education becomes a giant coloring book in which

students are instructed to fill in the outlines with colorful marks.

This kind of exalting suppresses freedom of conscience and freedom of thought because it puts so much beyond the reach of critical examination.

For the last six years, the National Association of Scholars has been tracking the books colleges and universities assign to freshmen for pre-college summer reading. This practice has grown in popularity as colleges have realized that their incoming classes possess little in common beyond social media addictions and popular culture. High schools do not reliably teach anything that might be taken as a base for common intellectual community, and the colleges themselves will certainly not repair the gap. Thus, many colleges attempt to fabricate a sense of community by having students read one book in common. But what will this one book be that will serve as the first and last basis of common experience in the community of the learned?

The choices show us what colleges actually exalt, since this is the one moment in the whole of a college today when its ideal and purposes are condensed unto a single curricular event. What do the students read? Not Mill’s *On Liberty*. Or anything by Locke. Not something from the Greek classics or a masterpiece of American literature. More than 90 percent of the books chosen were written after 1990, and more than half in the last five years. They are mostly books that are classified at the ninth-grade reading level. And the great majority are books about the struggle for (what else?) social justice.

These “Beach Books,” as I call them, can bookend this account of suppression of free speech in the academy. The free flow of ideas requires that people actually have ideas and some capacity to argue them, support them with evidence, and comprehend opposing views. If the resources students start with are slim, the obligation of the university is to increase them. Locking students into low expectations for themselves and capsulizing intellectual community in ephemeral works of political and cultural fashion exalts an inner emptiness. Free speech with nothing to say isn’t any kind of freedom at all.

Inverting academic freedom

by Peter Bonilla

Early last year I picked up Christopher Priest's 1974 science fiction novel *The Inverted World*. Briefly, *The Inverted World* takes place in a city whose survival depends on the work of a secretive guild whose members winch the city forward on rails, deconstructing and reconstructing the system as they go along, to keep the city safe from an impending and ruinous gravitational field. The city aims for something called the optimum, a theoretical point at which gravity is more or less normal, but which is doomed to fall further out of reach as the city, despite its workers' best efforts, inches towards its own oblivion.

The world reveals itself to Helward Mann, the novel's protagonist, when he is sent south of the city on assignment. As he ventures away from the optimum and the crush of the world's gravity magnifies, the mountains around him become hills, and the hills become flatlands. His traveling companions take on monstrous proportions, grotesquely fat and short, and he has no choice but to give himself in to forces far beyond his understanding or control as the negative curvature of the world is exposed, the terrain on which he stands grows nearly vertical, and gravity verges on infinity.

The idea of inversion has recurred in my thinking as I've evaluated the landscape of academic freedom in the past few years and defended the rights of faculty members trying to chart its terrain. In this climate the professor's autonomy is increasingly under threat—from non-academic administrators, progressively more emboldened students, and, more and

more, the federal government. Where once the faculty's central role in everything from the setting of curricula to the tenor of discussion they prefer in their classroom was taken as given, the faculty today can have shockingly little agency in conducting even their most basic functions. In short, things we once understood to be as fundamental to the life of the academy as gravity or the curvature of the earth, we no longer can. The classroom is being inverted, to the benefit of none.

If a single case may exemplify this trend, it may be that of Professor Andrea Quenette at the University of Kansas. Quenette's case occurred in the shadow of student protests at the University of Missouri, which triggered similar protests in solidarity at dozens of major campuses nationwide. In the fall of 2015 at Mizzou, students mounted increasingly visible protests against perceived racial harassment and discrimination endemic in Mizzou's campus atmosphere, and what they viewed as a lackluster response from the Mizzou administration to their concerns. One graduate student launched a hunger strike and vowed to carry it on so long as Timothy Wolfe remained president of the University of Missouri System. Members of Mizzou's football team threatened to boycott the program in solidarity with the protesters. In one particularly notorious incident, a since-terminated professor named Melissa Click recruited students to remove a student journalist filming events on the quad. In a video since seen millions of times, Click called out, "Who wants to help me get this

reporter out of here? I need some muscle over here. Help me get him out.”

The University of Kansas was one of the many campuses feeling the reverberations of the Mizzou protests when Andrea Quenette entered her classroom on November 12. The previous evening, in fact, the university had held an impromptu town hall meeting addressing some of the Mizzou protesters’ same concerns about racism and discrimination, attended by roughly one thousand community members. Quenette, an assistant professor of communications, had planned to use her own graduate seminar to discuss similar issues, and saw the Mizzou protests as the perfect launching point.

Quenette, as a white woman, had not known firsthand the forms of racism, harassment, and discrimination that some others had, and made a point of saying so, allegedly stating, “As a white woman I just have never seen the racism. . . . It’s not like I see ‘Nigger’ spray painted on walls . . . ?” For simplicity’s sake we’ll take this characterization of her words at face value, even though there is reason to question the fairness of the testimony, given it was posted online by one of her graduate students in a blog post titled “An Open Letter Calling for the Termination of Dr. Andrea Quenette for Racial Discrimination.” Even as recounted by her student antagonists, however, it seems clear that Quenette was inviting other students to share their perspectives by being upfront about the limitations of her own.

The open letter, signed by eleven graduate students, including one who was not present during the discussion, called Quenette’s remarks “an active denial of institutional, structural, and individual racism” that “perpetuates racism in and of itself.” The letter characterized her very use of “the n-word”—no matter its critical context—as “inhospitable, anti-Black, and unacceptable” and “terroristic and threatening to the cultivation of a safe learning environment.” The signees argued further that Quenette’s words “not only create[d] a non-inclusive environment in opposition to one of the University of Kansas’ core tenets, but actively destroy[ed] the very possibility of realizing those values and goals.” More to the point, the students claimed that her very words

violated KU’s anti-harassment policy. Six of them filed discrimination complaints against her, and all of them refused to attend class so long as she was its instructor. Quenette took a “voluntary” leave of absence and stayed away from the KU campus for four months before finally being cleared of the charges.

At my employer, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), we have been observing for some time that while for years the biggest threat to free speech and academic freedom on college campuses came from their swelling administrative ranks, the strongest voices in favor of censorship on campus now come from the students themselves. We’ve seen this drive manifested in numerous ways, from troublesome demands for trigger warnings on class syllabi to campaigns demanding universities disinvite speakers they dislike to increased emphasis on microaggressions and demands for bias reporting systems that allow them to report speech including professors’ in-class speech, instantly, and anonymously, for investigation by campus authorities or even by law enforcement.

The demands made by students in solidarity with the Mizzou protesters embodied this trend, offering several explicit calls for censorship and policing of student and faculty expression: Protesters at Missouri State University demanded a “commitment to differentiating ‘hate speech’ from ‘freedom of speech’”; Duke University protesters called for professors and other staff to be put “in danger of losing their jobs, and non-tenure track faculty will lose tenure status [*sic*] if they perpetuate hate speech that threatens the safety of students of color”; Students at Kennesaw State University demanded “strong repercussions . . . for offenders of racist actions and racial bias on campus”; Simmons College protesters called for “repercussions for racist actions performed by professors and staff” and demanded “micro- and macro-aggressions . . . be taken seriously and met with the highest level of urgency and care.”

Perhaps more important than the fact of these widespread student protests and the demands they generated, however, is the moment

at which they arrived, and what that timing means for the future of the faculty. If this were a time when the faculty role in university governance was robust and secure, that would be one thing. But it is not. It is weaker than it was previously, and it is continuing to weaken—the result of both internal and external pressures.

Historians, social scientists, journalists, and other observers have spent years documenting the changes in the academy that have fundamentally altered the role of the faculty in various levels of decision-making and policy-setting. Anyone who has read dispatches from academic conventions of recent years knows that tenured professorships are increasingly hard to come by, while the ranks of college administrators have exploded by comparison—with persons in such positions sometimes earning twice or three times as much as the best-compensated full professors. While universities spend millions on amenities having nothing to do with education, they increasingly rely on contingent faculty earning only a few thousand dollars per course, with no prospects of tenure. And while universities claim the contrary, it is a simple fact that as their job security goes down, so do their academic freedom protections. The natural effect has been that administrators have usurped more and more decision-making ability from the faculty. But it is not simply that the traditional faculty role in university governance has been watered down as universities have become bigger, more sprawling, and more corporatized. It is also that university administrations are increasingly willing to disregard faculty input even in areas where faculty expertise has traditionally been given deference.

If several factors over the past few decades have contributed to the diminished circumstances of the faculty, it seems safe to say that in recent years few actors from outside the academy have had a more dramatic effect on academic freedom and faculty governance than the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), beginning with the promulgation of its 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter (DCL).

From the beginning, FIRE has led the national charge against OCR's overreach on a number of fronts. Among the most important of them is its mandate that, when trying cases of alleged sexual assault, universities use the perilously low "preponderance of the evidence" standard. The American Association of University Professors has repeatedly criticized this lowered standard—requiring only a roughly 50.01 percent degree of certainty—as well. The DCL's faults are myriad and fundamental, down to the fact that it was unlawfully issued—that while OCR claims it is merely providing guidance it is in fact implementing policy, and doing so without the required notice-and-comment period for policymaking. (At the time of this writing, FIRE is sponsoring a lawsuit against the Department of Education, which challenges the DCL's legality on this point.)

Even as OCR has mandated sweeping, troubling changes in the way universities approach matters of due process, universities have often gone beyond what OCR deemed necessary even if they privately chafed at the burdens of the new requirements. Given OCR's ability to cut off a university's federal funding—effectively a death sentence—for falling out of compliance, they have a strong incentive to do so. It is this culture of fear among university administrators that may prove to have a longer-lasting effect than OCR's mandates or the punitive resolutions it has come to with the universities it has investigated. (As of October 2016, OCR reports that it has 283 open investigations at 215 institutions.) Under universities' revamped procedures, a single investigator may be appointed to serve as both judge and jury. The right to active participation of counsel is often seriously constrained. The right to cross-examination is strongly discouraged. The recording of proceedings may be prohibited, and key evidence may be withheld or rejected at the university's discretion. The pretense of neutrality is eviscerated by the pressure to take a harder line against sexual assault and harassment, and a "not guilty" finding can be all that is necessary to expose a university to an invasive investigation of its practices. Universities know this well, and act accordingly.

Where this culture has been imported into the classroom, its effect on academic freedom has been profound. The University of Denver suspended the longtime professor Arthur Gilbert and banished him from its campus for more than one hundred days after anonymous complaints were filed by two graduate students in a course Gilbert taught on the history of America's drug wars, which covered such topics as "purity crusades" and their attacks on vices such as masturbation and prostitution. The tenured Appalachian State University sociology professor Jammie Price was removed from teaching over complaints regarding, among other matters, her screening of a documentary critical of the adult film industry. Louisiana State University fired the education professor Teresa Buchanan, just as she was at the threshold of being promoted to full professor, arguing that her occasional use of profanity and vulgarity in the company of her students violated its sexual harassment policy, in particular its OCR-inspired language prohibiting "unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical behavior of a sexual nature."

It is not a coincidence that all of these cases involve speech or curricular material touching on sexual topics. FIRE and the AAUP, among other organizations, have pointed out for years now that the perilously low protections for due process and academic freedom wrought by OCR's demands all but guarantee we will see more cases like theirs. What has gone less observed is how their universities responded to the objections of faculty when they weighed in on academic freedom and free speech grounds. At the University of Denver, a faculty investigative committee and the faculty senate both faulted the university for refusing to consider Gilbert's case from an academic freedom perspective. (The university's Title IX investigators, in fact, had acted appropriately and purposefully left this question open, calling on more qualified decision-makers to evaluate its findings in this regard.) Appalachian State declared that its faculty committees had no jurisdiction to hear Price's grievance over her treatment, claiming that Price's involuntary leave somehow did not constitute a "serious sanction." The faculty retorted that this was

such a vast departure from Appalachian State's written policies as to effectively constitute new policy enacted without faculty input. At LSU, a faculty investigative panel convened by the university was unanimous in its recommendation that termination for Teresa Buchanan not be considered.

In all cases, the faculty's input was rejected, and the universities took their own preferred course. Of this environment, the AAUP concluded in a report on "The History, Uses, and Abuses of Title IX" that OCR's increasingly activist and punitive posturing threatens "academic discussion of sex and sexuality," faculty members' "protected speech in teaching, research, and extramural contexts," and "robust faculty governance."

As OCR as well as the Department of Justice have continued muddying the waters for free speech and due process—with settlements at the University of Montana in 2013 and the University of New Mexico in 2016 effectively requiring universities to impose unconstitutional speech codes and conduct investigations of even clearly protected expression—universities have become ever more brazen and less self-aware. The case of one professor I worked with recently at one Texas institution may sum it up best. This professor, a longtime tenured performing arts faculty member, was reported to have made one of his students uncomfortable with some of his in-class remarks. He was removed from class, lost a semester of teaching while his case was investigated, was forbidden from having a recording of his hearing, and was initially allowed only to review a summary of the written notes taken by the investigators. He wasn't given any useful information about the reason for the complaint against him, precluding the possibility of mounting an effective defense. At the end of this process, he was found responsible for violating his university's policy on sexual harassment. FIRE helped him appeal his case, in part on academic freedom grounds, because the charges against him directly implicated speech both in his faculty and his personal capacities.

Maybe not surprisingly, the university rejected his appeal, but one of the grounds it

gave for doing so was stunning. The letter, from the university's Title IX officer, stated, "academic freedom rights do not apply to violations of [University System] Policy and regulation." Such is the devaluation of academic freedom that a non-academic administrator can argue, without irony, that academic freedom rights do not apply when considering complaints directly stemming from remarks made in one's academic role. We might find another such example in the realm of "trigger warnings," a cause of considerable trepidation even among sympathetic faculty. For all the well-placed concerns about their use being made compulsory, universities have by and large left the decision on whether and how to use them with individual faculty, where it belongs. But there are exceptions, Drexel University being one of them. Drexel's Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Misconduct Policy states that "[i]t is expected that instructors will offer appropriate warning and accommodation regarding the introduction of explicit and triggering materials used," a fact FIRE discovered when conducting its routine annual survey of the institution's speech codes. When FIRE publicly called attention to this fact, it may well have marked the first time the majority of Drexel's faculty was alerted to its existence.

While I think there is some evidence to suggest universities are starting to get wise to the perilous environment for free speech, few have been brave enough actually to take a strong stance in the hopes of correcting course. The University of Chicago is one of the rare outliers. In January 2015, Chicago's Committee on Freedom of Expression, led by the law professor Geoffrey Stone, gave a ringing endorsement of freedom of speech and academic freedom. Among its many laudable sentiments, it declares:

Because the University is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. . . . [I]t is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals

from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.

The Chicago Statement deserves to become a national model, and versions of the statement have been passed at several other institutions since, including Princeton, Purdue, Johns Hopkins, and Washington University. This year Chicago took its commitment one step further with a letter to incoming freshmen saying that "[o]ur commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so-called 'trigger warnings,' we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual 'safe spaces' where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives." If the letter's strident tone alienated some, the message was clear: students come to Chicago to experience an atmosphere of intellectual rigor, and unreflective demands for such protections risk dampening that rigor.

Chicago is still, however, an outlier. One doesn't even have to leave the area to find university leaders fully embracing the rhetoric of microaggressions, trigger warnings, and their kin. At Northwestern University's convocation this year, President Morton Schapiro dismissed critics of trigger warnings and microaggressions as "idiots" and "lunatics," not thinking, apparently, of those who might feel microaggressed by such insults. (He is also, of course, the same Morton Schapiro who was presiding at Northwestern when it put Professor Laura Kipnis through a seventy-two-day Title IX investigation—later scathingly exposed by Kipnis for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*—for her criticisms of the "sexual paranoia" pervading academic culture.)

I do not think that it is a coincidence that several university faculties have initiated efforts to pass the Chicago Statement amidst the current wave of student demands for censorship. Furthermore, several university leaders have used the student protests as an occasion to make laudable statements on the power of free speech and the necessity for exposure to opposing views and the ability to tolerate those who see things differently. Even President Obama has on multiple occasions

publicly chided the mentality behind student calls for censorship and disinvitations. More universities should follow such examples. Passing the Chicago Statement would be a fine place to start, both as a recommitment to first principles and as a reminder of the faculty's proper place in the governance of the university.

I return here to Professor Andrea Quenette's story, because I haven't given the full account of how it ended. Ultimately, it isn't a happy ending. While she was cleared of discrimination charges at the end of a four-month investigation, KU, following a separate review, rejected her application for a research extension in advance of her pre-tenure review. In plain English, the effect of this rejection is to deny her tenure bid preemptively, making her days at KU officially numbered. It's not for me or FIRE to judge KU's decision on the merits, but it seems difficult to imagine this coming about had not her students first made a concerted attempt to drive her from the classroom by deluging the university with discrimination complaints, casting a pall over

everything that followed. While the discrimination complaints ultimately failed, it feels that the students are nonetheless getting their wish. No doubt many of Quenette's tenured and untenured colleagues alike have noted her case as a measure of the potential cost of tackling controversial and difficult issues in the classroom.

With stories like Quenette's and the others shared in this essay, hopefully the point has been driven home that both strong academic freedom protections and a strong governance model are necessary for the future of the faculty. As they mutually reinforce each other, so too can they wither when they come unraveled. In evaluating the current landscape, I'm reminded of the paradox of the unstoppable force meeting the immovable object, not because it is accurate but because it is not. I do not necessarily believe the pressures on faculty governance and academic freedom I've described constitute such a force. Given the fragility of the institutions they act upon, they do not need to.

Medical correctness

by *Anthony Daniels*

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

—Matthew 7:14

In *Russia in 1839*, Custine wrote that Tsar Nicholas I was both eagle and insect: eagle because he soared over society surveying it with a sharp raptor's eye from above, and insect because he bored himself into every tiny crack and crevice of society from below. Nothing was either too large or too small for his attention; and sometimes one feels that political correctness is rather like that. For the politically correct, nothing is too large or too small to escape their puritanical attention. As a consequence, we suspect that we are living an authoritarian prelude to a totalitarian future.

Whether medical journals be large or small depends, of course, on the importance that you attach to them. As a doctor I am inclined to accord them more importance than the average citizen might; but what is indisputable is that they are not immune from political correctness, quite the reverse. Reading them, one has the impression of being buttonholed by a terrific bore at a cocktail party, who won't let you go unless you agree with his assessment of the situation in Somalia.

At first sight, medicine might appear an unpromising subject for political correctness. You are ill, you go to the doctor, he tries to cure you, whoever you might be: what could be more straightforward than that? But in fact medicine is a field ripe for political correct-

ness's harvester. The arrangement by which health care is delivered is eminently a subject of politics; moreover we live in the golden age of epidemiology, in which the distribution of health and disease is studied more closely even than the distribution of income. Inequalities are usually presented as inequities (they have to be selected carefully, however: I have never seen the superior life expectancy of women, sometimes considerable and present almost everywhere, described as an inequity, even though the right to life is supposedly the most basic of all in the modern catechism of human rights). The decent man abominates unfairness or injustice: therefore the man who abominates unfairness or injustice is decent.

Political correctness—linguistic and semantic reform as the first step to world domination—came comparatively late to medical journals. This is because, where intellectual fashions are concerned, doctors are usually in the rear, rather than the vanguard. Their patients plant their feet on the ground for them, whether they want them planted there or not; for there is nothing quite like contact with a cross-section of humanity for destroying utopian illusions. Of course, there have been politically radical doctors—many of the informants of the *Blue Books* praised by Marx for the honesty of their exposure of truly appalling conditions were doctors—but their radicalism has been generally of the practical variety in response to the very real and present miseries that they encountered in their work. Their reformism was neither utopian nor a

manifestation of the search for transcendent purpose in a post-religious world.

Medical journals have thus gone over to political correctness—admittedly with the zeal of the late convert—comparatively recently. Such correctness, however, is now deeply entrenched. With *The New England Journal of Medicine* for July 16, 2016 in hand, I compared it with the first edition I came across in a pile of old editions in my slightly disordered study: that for September 13, 2007, as it happened, which is not a historical epoch ago. What started as mild has become strident and absurd.

The first article in the earlier *NEJM* concerned the insufficient use of typhoid vaccination in those parts of the world in which the disease is still prevalent. It was titled “Putting Typhoid Vaccination on the Global Health Agenda.” “The Global Health Agenda”: the very phrase is a masterpiece of *suggestio falsi* and *suppressio veri*, which one suspects immediately (and correctly) of having a vast hinterland of saccharine, politically correct, and potentially dictatorial sentiment. In an article titled “Global Health Agenda for the Twenty-First Century” we find:

Health in its own right is of fundamental importance and, like education, is among the basic capabilities that give value to human life (Sen & Sen 1999). It is an intrinsic right as well as a central input to poverty reduction and socioeconomic development. Health-related human rights are core values within the United Nations and WHO, and are endorsed in numerous international and regional human rights instruments. They are intimately related to and dependent on the provision and realization of other social and economic human rights such as those of food, housing, work and education.

Apart from being execrably written, this is, where it can actually be understood, the most patent nonsense. My rights are not infringed because I fall ill; I have, for example, no *right* to an unenlarged prostate though I would much prefer to have one; and there can be no right to immortality as there is to freedom from arbitrary arrest.

Just because something is nonsense, of course, does not mean that people fail to believe it, and the notion that health care is a human right is now all but unassailable, and unassailed, in our medical journals (which see every sectional interest but their own). I used to ask medical students whether they could find any good reason for providing medical attention to people other than that they had a right to it: and on the whole they could not, so thoroughly had the notion of rights entered their mind and destroyed their moral imaginations.

But at least the article in the *NEJM* in 2007 had some medical substance. According to various estimates, between 200,000 and 600,000 people died annually of typhoid at that time, often children of school-age, and the disease is largely preventable by means of immunization which is very cheap. I think we can all agree that it would be desirable to eliminate it, or at least reduce it very considerably.

But to do so, is it really true that “the international health community will need to increase the priority and sense of urgency accorded to the control of this disease”? Is a kind of world government essential to the task?

According to the data provided, in the article, the vast majority of the problem resides in South and South East Asia, in countries such as India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, some of them no longer deeply impoverished. In the body of the text we read:

Vaccination can provide a near-term solution, as demonstrated in Thailand, where mass vaccination of schoolchildren with injectable, inactivated, whole-cell vaccines in the 1970s and 1980s led to sharp decreases in the incidence of typhoid fever and is credited with largely controlling the disease. However, because of their high rates of side effects, these older-generation vaccines have generally been abandoned as public health tools.

But as the article itself draws attention to the existence of new vaccines that are cheap and without serious side-effects, the question might well be asked why, if Thailand could conduct a successful immunization campaign

against typhoid in the 1970s and 1980s, it cannot do so in 2016, when it is considerably richer? Why does it need *a*, let alone *the*, global health agenda to do so? And what applies to Thailand applies to the other countries as well, give or take civil war whose health effects no global health agenda is likely to overcome.

In other words, what is being promoted in the article is not so much the eradication of typhoid as a kind of imperialism of good intentions, with its associated international bureaucracy (usually remunerated in Swiss francs, incidentally), for who can be found to speak up, in the name of biodiversity, for *Salmonella typhi* as an endangered species?

The article, though by no means watertight in its logic, is nevertheless not *egregious*. But a constant stream of such articles has now been published for years in all the major general medical journals, usually unopposed by any alternative view, and numbs the mind into a kind of acquiescence or surrender, with a loss of will critically to appraise what is written. For what would now be the point of doing so? It would be like trying to use a feather to keep oneself dry in a monsoon. I assume that something similar happened to readers of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, though of course I do not mean to imply that anything worse than loss of face would result if a doctor dared to show himself against the prevailing orthodoxy of medical journals.

The object of political correctness not being to spread truth but to exercise power, the more it violates common feeling or opinion while at the same time exercising a moral terror against dissenters, the more effective it is. It is not surprising, then, that it should grow ever more extreme, and attach itself to ever more arcane subject matter. Thus the first article in the edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine* for July 14, 2016—Bastille Day, appropriately enough, considering that there were only seven prisoners when the Bastille was stormed—was titled “Beyond Bathrooms—Meeting the Health Needs of Transgender People.”

If Marx were alive today, he would write not that history repeats itself, appearing first

as tragedy and then as farce, but that it repeats itself, appearing first as tragedy and then as bathos. The article in the *NEJM* begins:

One might have to go back to the era of racial desegregation of U.S. bathrooms to find a time when toilets received so much attention.

But even the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* puts the prevalence of what it calls Gender Dysphoria Disorder at about 0.005 percent: and the *DSM V* is not generally conservative in its estimates of prevalence, for example putting that of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) at 1.5 percent (that is to say, 3,000 times more common than Gender Dysphoria Disorder), though this condition and its diagnosis have more recently gone out of fashion, having enjoyed a phase of great popularity which gender dysphorics can only envy and aspire to emulate. Incidentally, DID replaced MPD (Multiple Personality Disorder): nothing, after all, can stop the march of progress, especially in science. Most of us, unfortunately, are still stuck at the *Three Faces of Eve* stage.

To mention the psychological peculiarities of one person in twenty thousand in the same breath as the travails of a tenth of the American population before the Civil Rights movement might seem insensitive, not to say insulting, but the politically correct can see offense given only by others, never by themselves. They generally do not have much a sense of humor either, for only they could read the following without a smile at the very least:

bathrooms matter for health. Transgender people who are barred from using bathrooms where they feel safe might feel they have no choice but to suppress basic bodily needs. Delayed bathroom use can cause health problems including urinary tract or kidney infections, stool impaction, and hemorrhoids.

But this is mad. Any decent transvestite—let alone transsexual—could use a women’s lavatory without undergoing the slightest interrogation as to his chromosomal sex.

More importantly, the article demands of the reader that he performs feats of *doublethink*, according to which he should keep in mind that transsexualism both is and is not an illness:

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) revised its guidelines to indicate that being transgender is not a mental disorder and that gender-affirming treatments are a valid focus of care for people who desire them; the APA has included gender dysphoria in its guidelines partly to cover people who have substantial distress or impairment and to ensure access to and coverage of desired medical interventions and treatments . . .

In other words, wishing to change your outward sexual appearance is not pathological, but when you are sufficiently unhappy at not being able to do so at your own expense, you become ill and should be able to do so at someone else's expense.

This is perilously close to soliciting fraud, for of course anyone can manufacture "substantial distress and impairment" at not getting what he wants. But even this is not all.

The article has a box with the heading *Definitions of Selected Identity Terms*. We realize at once that we are in the presence of a kind of Turkish Language Reform of the soul, in which what is aimed at is not accuracy but control of your thoughts. There is a warning asterisk after the word *Terms*:

Some concepts are evolving, so usage may vary.

The better, one might add, to keep you in a state of fear of uttering a word or phrase subsequently declared to be offensive, and thereby to exercise continued power over you.

Only a man with a mind of marshmallow could read these definitions and not simultaneously want to kill himself and fall about laughing. Here, for example, is the definition of a *cisgender man* (sex nowadays is like the Jordan of old, that is to say it comes in *Cis-* and *Trans-* varieties):

A person assigned male sex at birth who identifies as a man.

How, one wonders, is a person assigned male sex at birth? By drawing lots, perhaps, or by some random number sex-assigning machine? Incidentally, the article in the *NEJM* is only reflecting developments in the wider culture, much as a canary used to detect carbon monoxide down the shaft of a coal-mine. The other day, for example, I came across a heart-warming story in the *Washington Post*—heart-warming, that is, for the kind of person whose heart is warmed by reading the *Washington Post*—of a ten-year-old boy who was taken to a little girls' clothes shop by his mother and who came out wearing a pair of little girls' shoes. "I don't want to be a boy or girl," he said. "I just want to be a person." Compared with this, Little Nell was Zsa Zsa Gabor.

But the most interesting definition was that of genderqueer. None of my circle of acquaintances whom I asked to define the term had even heard of it, but I am glad to say that all those compulsory Microsoft updates that so irritate and frustrate me when I turn on my computer have included the adoption of the word as a normal term, for it is not underlined in red as being in error when I type it. Genderqueer is:

A person with a nonbinary gender identity, identifying as both a man and a woman or as neither.

In other words, being *genderqueer* is a bit like being a European according to the projectors of the European project: that is to say one identifies not as German or French or Portuguese, but as European.

If genderqueerism spreads, one can only hope for the future of the human race that the biotechnologists find a way of turning Man into a kind of hydra, the simple coelenterate that reproduces not sexually, but by budding. The hydra is genuinely genderqueer.

In none of the above do I mean to imply that *The New England Journal of Medicine* is uniquely tedious in its unctuous cleaving to the latest moral enthusiasm of the congenitally virtuous: far from it, if anything *The Lancet* is even worse. It still publishes much valuable scientific research, of course; but as

soon as any item touches on the social or political, it adopts a sententious *langue de bois* that glazes over the mind of the reader. Here are a couple of examples from a single edition, taken at random from a pile of copies of old editions in my study:

In his farewell speech . . . the outgoing UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasised five lessons from his ten-year tenure: the interconnectedness of the security of all people; the global community's responsibility for everyone's welfare; the respect for human rights and the rule of law as the indispensable foundations for our common humanity and shared belief in human dignity; the accountability of governments for their actions in the international context; and finally, the importance of a strong multilateral system—a reformed U.N.—to achieve results . . . Only with equitable, sustainable development and health at its core will the global community have a better future.

and:

For a global culture of peace to be built, the next generation must be imbued with new systems of thinking and feeling. Such approaches are the domain of cognitive science, translated through practice into perceptual and behavioural change. (December 23–30, 2006, Vol. 368)

All of this is obviously instinct with totalitarian implication and no doubt impulse. The impression one has when reading the medical journals of entering a totalitarian microclimate is strengthened by the fact that no criticism of this anesthetizing (and therefore dangerous) bilge is ever published in the journals in which it appears. I do not know whether this is the result of deliberate exclusion of criticism, or the fact that one of the effects of *langue de bois* is a sapping of the will to reply: who, after all, wants to spend his time arguing with someone who believes in the existence of a global community or the future existence of a global culture of peace? Sisyphus's task was a pleasant one by comparison.

It is instructive to contrast the language of the *Lancet* today with that of its language in the 1820s, when it was edited by its founder,

Thomas Wakley. Wakley was precisely the kind of man that Orwell describes Dickens as having been:

a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.

Wakley campaigned against specific abuses and was sued for libel at least nine times, defending himself in court and winning, morally if not quite always legally; in the end, his arguments for reform were usually triumphant. Here, again taken at random, is a passage from Wakley's *Address to the Readers of the Lancet* for the volume of 1829:

With regard to hospital reports [of operations conducted in them], these, let it be remembered, were equally denounced by our enemies, when we first set the example of publishing them. The times, however, are changed, and hospital reports are now recognised by all, except by those functionaries who, by reason of their imbecility, have cause to dread them, as an integral portion of the stock of public information. But there is this material difference between the hospital reports published in this Journal, and those which have recently been put forth by our imitators, that the latter have been supplied by the functionaries themselves, who have a manifest interest in suppressing whatever facts may be unfavourable to their reputation; whereas, our interest as clearly lies in giving a faithful and impartial detail of facts, whether favourable or unfavourable to the hospital surgeons.

These are the words of a free man, unafraid and generously angry. Those in his position today at medical journals are the promoters of smelly little orthodoxies, always afraid and glancing over their shoulder lest anyone should think them less than immaculate in their political correctitude. In the process, they spread the atmosphere of fear in which we all now live.

The intersectionality of fools

by Dominic Green

Over the last decade, the numbers of Chinese and Indian students at American universities have substantially increased. At the same time, faculty and students have campaigned to boycott China and India over the status of Tibet and Kashmir, to reject Chinese and Indian funding, and to shun collaboration with individual Chinese and Indian researchers. There have been organized assaults upon Chinese guest speakers and propaganda campaigns inciting students to purge universities of Chinese or Indian “influence,” including that of American citizens with a Chinese or Indian background. When students of Indian background object, they are informed that, wittingly or not, they are part of a global Hindu conspiracy.

Of course, none of this has happened. It is almost inconceivable that any of it would happen. All of this, however, has been directed against the State of Israel, and against American Jewish students, since the inception of BDS, the campaign for “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions” against the Jewish state. This dubious selectivity is one unique aspect of BDS. Another is the scale of its ambition. Generally, the introversions of Social Justice stop well before the water’s edge. There are global issues, most notably and vaguely the environment, but BDS is the only form of campus activism to attack a single state internationally—and a single group domestically.

BDS seeks to transform the atmosphere of university intellectual and social life, in order to effect changes in government and business

policy. BDS activists seek to control the intellectual environment, to create a “safe space” for the indoctrination of a biased and often false view of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, the practice of BDS tends towards the abuse of free speech, in that BDS activists frequently seek to curtail the freedom of others.

BDS uses strategies of exemplary stigmatization, intended to demonize the State of Israel and its supporters. Inevitably, and often by design, such intimidatory strategies include charging American Jews as complicit with the “racist” and “colonialist” Israeli state, or with “neoconservative” policies at home. While the freedom of speech of Jewish and pro-Israel students is BDS’s primary target, its strategies aim to curtail the freedom of speech of all students and faculty.

The BDS campaign models itself after the Anti-Apartheid Movement against white minority rule in South Africa. The BDS Movement was initiated at Ramallah in July 2005, in a joint appeal by some 170 Palestinian unions, political groups, professional associations, and “popular resistance committees.” The Palestinian groups called, in an artfully vague wording, for Israel to withdraw from “all occupied Arab lands”; to recognize the “fundamental rights” of Arab Israelis, who are purported to live under apartheid; and to comply with U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948, which called for the “right of return of Palestinian refugees” to what is now Israel, and which, as a non-binding resolution, has no legal weight.

The July 2005 declaration emerged from a rash of local calls for boycotts during the Second Intifada. In September 2000, the Palestinians launched a war of suicide bombings after Yasser Arafat had refused the offer of a Palestinian state at the Camp David talks. The Palestinians lost their war. By Arafat's death in November 2004, the Israel Defense Forces were once more in military control of the West Bank. The Palestinian defeat was confirmed at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit of February 2005, where the new Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, reaffirmed the Palestinian Authority's commitment to a negotiated two-state solution.

President Abbas, incidentally, has refused to endorse BDS.

Throughout the Second Intifada, Palestinian leaders of all factions appealed for external support, frequently by outright lies; for instance, in the claim of a massacre of civilians in the fighting at Jenin in 2002. Like terrorism, this propaganda was a form of asymmetric warfare, intended to draw the conflict onto a battlefield more amenable to Palestinian claims. Since 2005, it has continued as part of a longstanding effort to offset political weakness and military defeat by "internationalizing" the conflict.

The strategies of internationalization include calling for military intervention by the UN or NATO on human rights grounds; the pursuit of binding resolutions against Israel from the UN Security Council; the multiplication of non-binding resolutions from UN committees and the General Assembly; the prosecution of the State of Israel, and Israeli political and military leaders, in foreign or supranational courts; and the pursuit of economic and cultural boycotts. These strategies were always part of the Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian struggle to undo the defeats of 1948 and 1967. They have become known as "lawfare": war by means of law.

BDS is the informal wing of "lawfare." It seeks to isolate and attack Israel's political legitimacy, economy, and cultural links with other states, by changing the rules of civil institutions, and the customs of acceptable behavior, including what can and cannot be said in a university.

In the liberal democracies of the West, organizations sympathetic to BDS include Islamists of all stripes, Protestant churches with a liberation theology streak, trade and academic unions, and some members of the extra-parliamentary Left and the left-of-center media. There is little organized BDS activism among parliamentary conservative parties, or civil organizations associated with conservative parties, or the more traditional churches, or right-of-center newspapers. On the Anglophone Right, support for BDS remains a personal eccentricity, as in the case of British Conservatives like the erstwhile oil consultant Alan Duncan, who is now a Minister of State in Boris Johnson's Foreign Office. Generally, and especially on campus, BDS marches through the institutions with its left foot forward.

Efforts to boycott Israel are older than the Israeli state. In 1945, one of the founding objectives of the Arab League was to "frustrate further Jewish development in Palestine by means of a boycott against Zionist products." After 1948, the Arab Boycott extended to economic and diplomatic pressure against foreign governments and the shunning of private businesses trading with Israel. The Boycott, and the unified Arab "rejectionist" front against Israel, collapsed after the Egyptian-Israeli peace of 1980. Since 2000, a new rejectionist front has arisen, largely sponsored in the Middle East by Iran, and largely supported in the West by the hard Left.

We understand acts of terrorism as the propaganda of the deed, but lawfare is also that kind of propaganda. It is perhaps harder to detect, too. Although Western supporters of BDS are *de facto* allies of the homophobes and head-choppers of fellow rejectionists like the Iranian regime and Sunni Islamist groups, BDS speaks the language of liberal tolerance, universal law, and human rights. And who could be against that?

In Europe, support for BDS has manifested both in street protests and on campuses. During the Second Intifada, there were large and often violent protests against Israel in European capitals, organized by "red-green" coali-

tions of hard Left and Islamist groups. There was also an increase in assaults upon European Jews. A contemporary development, the errors surrounding the invasion and occupation of Iraq, saw a sharp increase in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. In cities across Europe, trade unions and town councils declared their anti-Zionism and support for BDS. Meanwhile, there were repeated calls for BDS from faculty and student groups. British universities have led the way.

All this reflects local conditions in Europe: the endurance of the hard Left and indigenous traditions of popular anti-Semitism, and the rise of Islamists as the spokesmen of broadly intolerant and often unassimilated Muslim populations. In the United States, however, BDS is primarily a phenomenon of the campus, and of certain departments on the campus. We must be fair here. In the department of chemistry, they do experiments. In the business school, they teach business. But in departments like Middle Eastern Studies, Anthropology, and English, they teach the politics of virtue. This too reflects local conditions.

The ideological foundations of BDS are no different from those of other campus groups which seek to restrict other people's liberties and expression for their own good, and for the collective good that is "social justice." This ideology can be traced to 1968, the Year Zero of the modern Left. This was the year in which the intellectuals of the Left, turning from the politics of class war to the politics of collective identity, ditched the Western working classes, and sought new allies at home and abroad. At home, the New Left embraced Black nationalism and turned on the Jews, who had only recently become White, as bourgeois capitalists. Abroad, the New Left lauded any "anti-imperialist" who promised to replace the perennially disappointing Western workers as the foot soldiers of international revolution.

Nineteen sixty-eight was also the year in which the New Left turned on Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War. It is not clear if Israel's conquest of the remainder of the Palestine Mandate caused the breach, so much as aggravated the New Left's hostility to capitalism, bourgeois society, and imperialism. At this

point, Israel still had a socialist government and economy, and was not especially bourgeois in habits. But, as Jean-Paul Sartre explained, the destruction of the Jewish state was a price worth paying for the rise of proletarian Arab consciousness.

The New Left was quite Old Left when it came to Jews and Zionism. The New Left talked up its anti-Soviet stance and its rejection of the polarities of the Cold War, but the language of the New Left's anti-Zionism was of 1950s Soviet origin. Israel was a "Nazi" or "fascist" state, a "racist" outpost of American "imperialism." This cant, with the sole novelty of the "apartheid" slur, survives intact in BDS, like a vintage slice of Crosby, Stills & Nash vinyl, still in its original wrapper.

Where do our young people learn this foul language? From their teachers, of course, especially the significant minority that George Orwell called "Bolshevik professors." The faculty-led U.S. Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel formed after the 2008–09 conflict in Gaza. In April 2013, the Association for Asian American Studies voted to boycott Israeli universities. In December 2013, the American Studies Association and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association joined the boycott.

Since then, the boycotters have both won and lost ground, but the net result has been the normalization of BDS as a respectable, even obligatory, topic for debate. The Modern Language Association condemned Israel in June 2014, but the organizers of its 2015 meeting persuaded the sponsors of a pro-BDS resolution to drop their proposal before it went to the vote. The American Anthropological Association joined the boycott in November 2015, but changed its mind in a narrow second ballot in 2016. In the same year, the American Historical Association voted down a proposal to censure Israel brought by a pro-BDS group, Historians Against the War. Meanwhile, the "intersectional perspective" of the National Women's Studies Association led to a pro-BDS vote in late 2015.

The methods of BDS are also as familiar as revivals of *Hair*. The troops are rallied and

indoctrinated by social media, rather than mimeographed handbills. But BDS works by what used to be called Happenings, a kind of Situationism in which planned eruptions of disorder are designed to reveal the fictitious nature of bourgeois liberalism. Consider, for instance, the Die-In, a pantomime revival of the Vietnam-style protest, in which people lie in the street and pretend to be dead Palestinians. Or the Apartheid Wall, the highlight of the annual theatrical that is Israeli Apartheid Week, in which pro-Palestinian activists erect a mock wall, and force students to pass through a mock checkpoint on their way into a lecture hall. Or the posting of mock eviction notices on the doors of rooms in student dormitories.

What about that old classic, storming the offices of the university administration, like the New York University students who accused their university's board of being on a "Zionist payroll"? Or the return of Herbert Marcuse's "repressive tolerance" in the disinviting of guest speakers suspected of Zionist sympathies, and the sabotage of free exchange with those guests who do make it to campus? Most nostalgic of all, in 2016 we saw the revival of the romance between the New Left and radical Black movements. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) activist Frank Leon Roberts, who has complained on Twitter about the "monopoly" of influence wielded by "Jewish elites," now teaches America's first BLM course. He is on the Zionist payroll at NYU.

In 2015, Black Solidarity With Palestine republished an open letter from 1970, originally a *New York Times* advertisement by the Committee of Black Americans for Truth about the Middle-East. The "solidarity rhetorics" of 1970 are identical to that of BDS. Israel is "the outpost of American imperialism in the Middle East." Zionism is "a reactionary racist ideology." Israel, along with Rhodesia and South Africa, is one of three "privileged white settler-states." The "world Zionist movement" is "big business." The Palestinian groups are "progressive." Israel practices "Jewish supremacy," and must be "de-Zionized." But the campaigners are, they insist, "not anti-Jewish."

Some of the signatories to the 1970 letter were still capable, if not of critical thought,

then of clicking a mouse in 2016. They include Angela Davis, who was perhaps Herbert Marcuse's most successful pupil, providing that success is measured by useful idiocy.

The internationalist aspect of this old romance is rekindled in Judith Butler's mad interpretation of Hamas as "part of the global Left." So too the current phrase "no-platforming" will be familiar to anyone who studied in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. Trotskyite and Maoist groups tried to recruit supporters with the slogan "No platform for fascists"—and by an anti-Zionism which characterizes Israel as the platform of America's fascist imperialism. At home, the fascist who must not be platformed today is, as in the old Stalinist propaganda, a "Zionist Jew."

In September 2016, City University of New York (CUNY) released a twenty-four-page report, commissioned following BDS-related disorder and alleged anti-Semitic behavior by BDS activists on CUNY campuses. The authors were Barbara Jones, a retired federal judge, and Paul Shechtman, an ex-prosecutor.

One of the events considered was a November 2015 rally at Hunter College, co-sponsored by the faculty union and the Professional Staff Congress. Jewish students were heckled with shouts of "Jews Out of CUNY" and "Death to Jews." Another occurred at Brooklyn College in February 2016. BDS activists invaded a faculty council meeting which was addressing budgets for diversity-related issues. When the chair of the council asked the activists to desist, he was derided as a "Zionist Jew."

The First Amendment clearly permits statements advocating BDS. The Israeli-Arab conflict can be construed as a consequence of European imperialism, a religious conflict, a national conflict, a civilizational conflict, or a civil war. Any full and thoughtful analysis might refer to all of these perspectives. There is, however, a difference between shouting "CUNY Out of Israel," and shouting "Jews Out of CUNY." That difference, as Lawrence Summers observed in 2013, is the difference between BDS program and its implementation. The objectives of BDS, Summers argued, are "anti-Semitic in effect." Perhaps because

the means of BDS propaganda are malicious and false, its ends tend towards intimidation and violence.

Jones and Shechtman conclude that a publicly funded university can intervene against speech acts only if they are part of “a course of conduct so pervasive or severe that it denies a person’s ability to pursue an education or participate in University life.” The premeditated and violent disruption of guest speakers clearly impedes the free exchange of ideas on which education and university life are supposed to rest. But do other forms of BDS activism meet the “pervasive and severe” criterion?

In early 2016, the AMCHA Initiative, which was founded by two Jewish professors in the California university system, surveyed Jewish undergraduates at the 113 U.S. undergraduate schools with the largest proportion of Jewish students: 57 percent of respondents reported the “targeting of Jewish students for harm, anti-Semitic expression, or BDS activity.” Confirming the perceived linkage between BDS and intimidatory behavior towards Jews, a larger and more detailed 2016 survey by the Cohen Center at Brandeis University found a high correlation between anti-Semitic expressions and acts and the presence on campus of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), one of the leading BDS groups.

Overall, 15 percent of the Brandeis respondents felt that their campus was a “hostile environment” for Jews. There was, however, considerable variance within this response at the state universities of New York and California: 43 percent of Jewish students at UCLA felt that their environment was in some degree hostile, and 41 percent at CUNY-Brooklyn—both responses which suggest “pervasive and severe” damage to free speech. But only 2 percent at USC and 10 percent at CUNY-Queens agreed. The causes of this variance remain to be clarified. The possible link between disruptive BDS activism and propagandizing in the classroom by pro-BDS faculty might be a place to start. At CUNY-Brooklyn, where an English professor called Israelis “assassins” and “baby killers,” nine professors wrote to protest disciplinary proceedings against the activists who attacked the faculty council meeting.

This is one of several areas in which more information is needed. Do significant numbers of non-Jewish students also believe that their education is being impaired and their rights of speech restricted by BDS activism and the related phenomena of biased curricula? What of universities without a significant cohort of Jewish students?

There is also the question of how BDS socializes students into university life, and its relation to wider patterns of thought. What of the apparent correlation between BDS and elite universities, public and private? In the taller pinnacles of the ivory tower, the rites of the campus must be performed with more than usual enthusiasm. Is BDS a subsidiary ideology, one of many strands of campus radicalism or, like precursor anti-Zionist and anti-Judaic ideologies, does it function as the “intersectional” unifier of a range of illiberal ideas?

Jonas and Shechtman also concluded that a public university has no right to “mandate civility or sanction isolated derogatory comments.” Perhaps not, but universities, public and private, devote much effort to mandating civility through speech codes, and sanctioning faculty and students accused of derogatory comments, often without proper process. When the speech codifiers extend the mandate of civility to some groups, but place one group beyond the pale of respect, they admit that their real motives are political.

The BDS Movement’s website claims that BDS is “an inclusive, anti-racist human rights movement that is opposed in principle to all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.” Such falsehoods can only pass for the truth in a closed and carefully policed intellectual system—an artificial environment, like that of the campus. And it can only grow if the corrective to falsity, the free and equal exchange of ideas, is suspended.

We must remember that the vast majority of faculty and students are not active in BDS, and that the American public’s sympathy for Israel has risen since the Second Intifada, while its sympathy for the Palestinians has fallen. Unfortunately, intimidation does not require a plurality of support, only a plurality of intimi-

dated people. The strategies of disinvitation, demonization, and physical intimidation have raised the cost of dissent from the BDS line.

What to do? So far, institutional action against BDS has resembled the construction of a firewall against the spread of BDS into American society. Several state legislatures have passed laws banning state employees from annulling contracts due to BDS pressure, or from giving contracts to pro-BDS businesses. Civil liberties organizations have claimed that these laws infringe the free choice of state employees.

The simple alternative, appealing to the ruined ideal of campus civility, has demonstrably failed. In 2007, some 300 university presidents denounced BDS as inimical to the academic spirit. This did not stop the scholarly organizations from endorsing BDS. If anything, such statements allows faculty to indulge their paranoid claim that they are being censored by a vast Zionist conspiracy.

A more productive strategy might attack BDS in the classroom on the grounds of academic fitness. By the standards of the academy, someone who cannot read Arabic is unqualified to pronounce on documents from the Palestinian Authority. Someone who cannot read Hebrew is unqualified to

analyze documents relating to land zoning in East Jerusalem. It is the responsibility of university administrators to maintain such standards, for the benefit of both faculty and students. It damages the credibility of all faculty members if some of them moonlight in other fields without proper qualification, and with blatantly partial motives.

The students should be treated like wayward children. Their broad ignorance and deep sentimentality are being exploited by BDS advocates. At Vassar in 2016, the administration warned that if the student body voted to endorse BDS, the administration would cut funding for student social activities. The BDS supporters withdrew their motion. The college disco was more important than the struggle with colonialist imperialism.

University administrators may be afraid of alienating their faculty, but they are more afraid of alienating their alumni donors. Vassar has also reported a 6 percent decline in alumni donations. At Oberlin, Jewish alumni have also organized and withheld donations. Private colleges are businesses. Rather than censor BDS advocacy, it is better to talk to the administrators in the real languages of the academy, professional and financial. Until then, BDS will remain the intersectionality of fools.

Ideology as a vocation

by Daniel Johnson

Until the advent of Anglo-American campus illiberalism, the collapse of academic resistance to Hitler in the 1930s appeared almost incomprehensible. It is only now, when the universities of our own time seem sometimes to be intent upon destroying their own *raison d'être*, that we can begin to understand how the intellectual elites of Germany, the cultural vanguard of the era, could have succumbed to the most monstrous doctrine of modern times. The story of this self-immolation is salutary for us because, though we know how the story of the German university ended, we do not know how far the betrayal of science and the humanities with which we are now confronted almost daily in our own academic institutions may yet have to go. Perhaps only the prospect of the catastrophe that a century ago befell some of the world's greatest centers of learning—a catastrophe from which they have even now not fully recovered—will bring today's intelligentsia to its senses.

The origins of the German universities, like others in medieval Christendom, lie in the requirement for a literate elite, initially clerical and imperial, but increasingly tailored to the administrative needs of the autonomous kingdoms and principalities that arose on the ruins of the Holy Roman Empire. Because these states were numerous, the distinctively pluralistic and localized German pattern of academic life diverged from the centralized institutions of France or England. The Reformation and the Westphalian settlement, based on the idea that each state should follow the faith of its

ruler, gave an additional momentum to this decentralization of higher education.

By the late eighteenth century, many European universities had extended their purposes beyond the theological training of the clergy and the legal training of the civil service to embrace a wider range of intellectual inquiry. In England, the Anglican monopoly of Oxford and Cambridge obliged nonconformist Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and agnostics to pursue their studies outside academia. As in Enlightenment Scotland, German universities had no more liberty but rather more variety. German academics lived under absolutist regimes that knew nothing of Lockean ideas of toleration, but in practice permitted a wide degree of theological latitude within their universities. Competition was not only a spur to excellence, but gave those who taught there a much wider choice than in England. Professors occasionally strayed beyond the bounds of religious orthodoxy or fell foul of political authority, yet they managed to hold onto their chairs either by making limited concessions, or by moving elsewhere. Those who could not stomach such compromises—such as Schopenhauer or Marx—gave universities a wide berth. Even such a radical thinker (and human misfit) as Nietzsche, however, could count on a lifelong professorial pension to support him in his endeavor to pull down the pillars of the temple.

For all their provincialism and bigotry, dozens of tiny German universities, most of them smaller and poorer than an Oxbridge college, sheltered many a physically frail, morally ques-

tionable, or intellectually eccentric genius who might not have survived outside the ivory tower, from the rigid visionary Immanuel Kant to the waspish satirist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (to whose under-age mistress the local enlightened despot turned a blind eye). The power of the state was palpable, but not ubiquitous: the professor who adhered to *Wissenschaft*, to science or scholarship, was generally left to his own devices. This was still more the case with the *Privatdozent*, the private scholar who received no salary but made a precarious living by charging fees for his lectures. Students, likewise, prided themselves on being wanderers: they were not obliged to take any degree and followed their heroes from one university to another.

In this story, as in so many others, the French Revolution and above all Napoleon changed everything. The “world spirit riding on horseback,” as an awestruck Hegel described the emperor after the Battle of Jena, had brought *Weltgeschichte* (world history) to the professor’s doorstep, reminded him and his colleagues that their homeland was at best Europe’s backwater, at worst its killing field. Some abandoned academic neutrality and used their positions either to call for revolutionary utopias or to stir up patriotic resistance to the invaders. Another Jena philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, did both—while incidentally demanding that all Jews have their heads cut off to be replaced by Christian ones.

Yet the crushing of Prussia inspired a more enduring academic revolution, too, led not by a professor but by an urbane private scholar and diplomat. Wilhelm von Humboldt is today remembered for his youthful manifesto of limited government, and also for the pioneering treatises he produced in retirement, with which he laid the foundations of modern linguistics. It was Humboldt who conceived, planned, and persuaded a philistine Prussian king to embrace the idea of the modern research university. Inspired by such polymathic examples as his own brother, the great scientist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, and of course Goethe, neither of whom ever fitted into a university environment, Wilhelm von Humboldt sought to establish in Berlin a new kind of university that would be open to all, a place of truly uni-

versal freedom of inquiry, ranging right across the natural, human, and applied sciences. Humboldt believed in academic independence, or “freedom to teach and to learn”; he wanted students to enjoy “solitude and freedom.” But he warned that the state “is always a hindrance as soon as it interferes [in the university], indeed matters would go infinitely better without it.”

The flaw in Humboldt’s reform, however, was that the Prussian state, which he envisaged as a benign nightwatchman, kept a tight grip on the appointment of faculties. Then and now, German professors have the legal status of civil servants, who may be hired and fired at the whim of their bureaucratic masters. As Max Weber observed, what this meant in practice was that criticism of church and state was limited: “Freedom of scholarship’ exists in Germany within the limits of political and ecclesiastical acceptability. Outside these limits there is none.”

Humboldt’s ideas came to fruition in 1810, with the erection of the Friedrich Wilhelm University on Berlin’s grandest thoroughfare, Unter den Linden. Today it rightly bears Humboldt’s name, for it is his legacy, not only to Germany but also to the world. Combined with the existing academies of the arts and sciences, and based on the research seminar, Berlin became the model for all the new universities that sprang up everywhere in the nineteenth century. America, in particular, adopted the Berlin rather than the Oxbridge model, after so many German liberals sought asylum across the Atlantic after the failed 1848 revolution. By 1900, Germany had established its pre-eminence in many fields, from mathematics to chemistry, from history to social sciences. The range and rigor of examinations, together with the prerequisite for academic teaching of a doctoral dissertation followed by a second book-length *Habilitation*, made German *Wissenschaft* the envy of the world. As international comparisons became easier, it soon became clear that German professors were winning more Nobel and other academic prizes than any other country.

Yet the global prestige of the German university bred a particular kind of hubris that afflicted the newly united, Prussian-dominated Germany that emerged under Bismarck. Under enlightened despotism, Humboldt’s humanistic

ethos had prevailed, but under the new imperial dispensation—which in fact imposed democracy and Jewish emancipation with blood and iron—the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake gave way to a closing of the German mind. This closure emanated from Berlin throughout the universities. Classical liberalism degenerated into an illiberalism that gradually turned against democracy and the rule of law (*der Rechtsstaat*). Instead of the disinterested research and dispassionate criticism that had made German thought the global gold standard, a new tone entered academic discourse: a specifically German ideology.

We owe the phrase to Marx, of course, who borrowed the concept of “ideology” from Condorcet but, unlike the Frenchman, gave it a pejorative and polemical twist. Still, the manuscript of *The German Ideology* was not published until the 1920s, and by then Marx’s analysis of Hegel and the various schools of his disciples was hopelessly out of date. In any case, Marx’s own claim to have created a “scientific socialism” was more than dubious. Indeed, it was largely the fear of Marxism—the ideology of the rising working class and its party, the Social Democrats—that provoked the backlash against Western ideas among students and professors. The new German ideology, before, during, and after the First World War, was based not on the theory of class, but of race—and in practice on anti-Semitism. The matrix of the German mind, which had conceived everything from the historical-critical method of analyzing texts and sources to quantum mechanics and relativity, now gave birth to monsters of hatred and intolerance. Student fraternities had long preferred duelling to studying, and had always enjoyed excluding and occasionally beating up Jews; they had, however, usually been kept in check by their teachers. Now this burgeoning German ideology took root in, was nurtured by, and ultimately corrupted the very institutions that ought to have resisted it.

It is difficult to identify the turning point. But the “Anti-Semitism Dispute” of the 1880s, which was fought out between two leading Berlin academics, is as good a place as any. On one side was the leading historian of early nineteenth-century Germany, Heinrich von Treitschke, whose political lurch to the Right mirrored that of the National Liberals to whose

ranks he belonged. On the other side was another liberal, the great historian of the ancient Roman republic, Theodor Mommsen, who mounted a solitary defense of German Jewry—the most robust from a prominent gentile before 1914. Yet it was Treitschke’s phrase “the Jews are our misfortune” that gained resonance: this marked the moment when anti-Semitism began to gain academic respectability in Germany, and Treitschke’s politics left a deeper mark among the German mandarins than Mommsen’s.

Jews had never found it easy to be fully accepted in Germany; after anti-Semitism became a political force in the 1880s, the unofficial discrimination that deprived even the most extraordinary Jewish scholars of the coveted title of *Ordinarius* became more entrenched. Baptized Jews were an exception to this exclusion, but even they were not above suspicion. Gradually, the “Althoff system” of academic appointments (so-called after Friedrich Althoff, the key man at the Prussian ministry of culture between the 1880s and the 1900s) relaxed sufficiently to allow a few unbaptized Jews to rise in the profession, but it was not until the Weimar Republic that such appointments became normal—and then only for a few years.

Meanwhile, the student bodies had become ever more anti-Semitic, embittered by the war and radicalized by subsequent revolutionary upheavals. In 1927 C. H. Becker, the liberal Prussian Culture Minister, refused to recognize the main student union, the Deutsche Studentenschaft, because it excluded Jews, but he was fighting a losing battle. By 1931 the Deutsche Studentenschaft had been taken over by the Nazi Student League, helped on by nationalist fraternities that it would soon absorb. Student numbers rose during the economic crises of the Weimar Republic to reach double the pre-war total, including many impecunious, angry young men in search of an identity; they thrived on the cult of youth that was so characteristic of the period and especially of the nascent Nazi movement.

Against this background, Max Weber’s celebrated lecture “Science as a Vocation” (*Wissenschaft als Beruf*), given in Munich in November 1917, assumes the character of an elegy for a lost ideal and a warning of what lay ahead. Weber tells us that

he bluntly informs his most able students that academic life is “an utter gamble,” which rewards popularity rather than intellectual integrity. “Of course,” he adds, “if the student is a Jew, you can only say: *lasciate ogni speranza*.” The intellectual life is not about happiness; it confers meaning solely by accepting “the disenchantment of the world” by excluding “the modern intellectualist romanticism of the irrational.” Weber deals severely with professors who take on the role of the “prophet or the demagogue.” They should speak in public where they can be criticized; in the lecture hall, he says, it is for the listeners to stay silent and for the teacher to speak. For a professor to exploit his status of being above criticism is “irresponsible.” Weber denounces the “professorial prophecy that forgets that the only morality that exists in the lecture room is that of plain intellectual integrity. This integrity enjoins us” to tell “all those multitudes today who are waiting for new prophets and new saviors” that “we must go about our work and meet the ‘challenges of the day’—both in our human relations and in our vocation.”

That this lecture has become so famous is indicative of the fact that so few German academics spoke out openly against the incipient intellectual corruption of the universities. Weber was only able to give this lecture (and its companion piece, “Politics as a Vocation,” two years later) because the Rector of Munich, Immanuel Birnbaum, was a relatively open-minded figure who was evidently worried about the replacement of integrity by ideology. Weber, who died in 1920, never lived to see the prophets and demagogues take over the universities. But in 1927 Martin Heidegger, a young philosopher at Freiburg, published what would become a sacred text of the new “romanticism of the irrational”: *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*). Heidegger cultivated an academic style that was the antithesis of Weber’s austere image of “intellectual integrity”: instead of frock coats and stiff collars, he wore outfits more suitable for hiking, not unlike the paramilitary brownshirted SA. Heidegger challenged the established hierarchy based on seniority. If one listens to recordings of his lectures—admittedly made many years later—one immediately understands the mesmerizing effect they must have had on students: the rhetorical

stream of consciousness and incantatory delivery are less reminiscent of a philosopher than of a poet. Heidegger, in short, had plenty of what Weber called “charisma,” but his vocation could hardly be described as scholarly or scientific. What Heidegger was offering students was not “intellectual integrity,” but meaning, experience, transcendence, a glimpse of the numinous—in other words, ideology.

As Hitler seized power in 1933, it turned out that this new kind of academic vocation was also what many of his professorial colleagues had been in search of. Students and faculty members alike embraced the Nazi regime and looked forward to the restoration of the true purpose of the university. Heidegger’s inaugural lecture as Rector of Freiburg has gained notoriety for its endorsement of the Third Reich, its use of what Viktor Klemperer later called the *lingua tertii imperii*, or LTI, and its fawning references to Hitler. What is perhaps equally significant, however, is that Heidegger thought he was engaged in the “self-assertion” (*Selbstbehauptung*) of the German university, when in reality he was abandoning everything that Humboldt and the whole tradition stood for. Heidegger saw himself not as a teacher, but a leader, even a cultural warrior. In one of his proclamations as rector, he ordered his students: “May you ceaselessly grow in the courage to sacrifice yourselves for the salvation of our nation’s essential being and the increase of its innermost strength in its polity. Let not your being be ruled by doctrine or ‘ideas.’ The Führer himself and he alone *is* the German reality, present and future, and its law. Study to know: from now on all things demand decision, and all action responsibility. Heil Hitler!”

Anti-Semitism only rarely surfaces in Heidegger’s public utterances, but recent scholarship has revealed that he fully shared the regime’s ideology in this respect too—above all in his recently published and hitherto private “Black Notebooks,” with their references to the nefarious influence of “world Jewry” on Western civilization. He even refers to the Holocaust, albeit in an abstract way, and seeks to blame the genocide on the “machinations” (*Machenschaft*) of the Jews themselves: “When the essentially ‘Jewish,’ in the metaphysical sense,

struggles against what is Jewish, the high point of self-annihilation in history is attained.” Heidegger was anything but naïve about the Nazis; indeed, he exults in their capacity for cruelty: “National Socialism is a barbaric principle.

Soon after the war, the reckoning began: Heidegger’s conduct was subjected to withering scrutiny by a handful of former colleagues such as Karl Jaspers, Jewish former students such as Karl Löwith, and Jewish émigrés such as Eric Weil. But most of the German academic community defended him, as did Hannah Arendt, who promoted him in America as the greatest thinker of the century. The debate has continued ever since. Many still defend him; for example, Slavoj Žižek denounces the “criminalization” of Heidegger, whom he reveres as a “great authentic philosopher” and his works as “a true philosophical classic.” Nevertheless, Heidegger’s conduct still evokes surprise and dismay in many commentators, all the more so in that he never repudiated such sentiments after 1945. Yet how could Heidegger disown something that was much more than a doctrine or a set of ideas? For him, this ideology was a vocation, a vocation that had chosen him rather than the reverse. To renounce this vocation was impossible: his ideology was his destiny.

What lessons can or should we learn from the German universities’ debacle? The content of the ideology is obviously different today, although it is now commonplace to find demands on campus for race to be given a much higher profile, such as the recent Harvard Law School article calling for “race-based mobilizations.” Anti-Semitism is re-emerging, too, with “Zio” now the insult of choice among Oxford students. All this is made possible by the insidious cultural mutation that replicates Germany’s paradigm shift from integrity to ideology. Scholarship requires one to follow the evidence, the logic, and above all one’s conscience. Ideology promises a release from all three, into a gravitas-free zone where all that matters is commitment to a cause. Once a scholar has made ideology rather than integrity his or her vocation, it is almost irrelevant which ideology it is. Two years after the war, Eric Weil wrote an article on “The Case of Heidegger” for *Les Temps Modernes*, the journal of Jean-Paul

Sartre, who made himself the Mephistopheles to Heidegger’s Satan. Weil detected throughout Heidegger’s work “Nazi language, Nazi morality, Nazi thought, Nazi sentiment.” Heidegger’s claim that he had protested against the biological racism of Rosenberg was hardly an extenuation in Weil’s eyes: the philosopher was accused, not of Rosenbergism, but of Hitlerism. A thief might claim that he had not, after all, raped a little girl, wrote Weil. That argument would hardly persuade the court to acquit him.

We must likewise take care not to let off our own donnish demagogues too lightly. If our universities have opened their doors to ideology, thereby excluding everything that does not conform to ideological norms, it is no use them denying this or that excess. Instead, we should beware of what happens to universities when the free pursuit of knowledge and truth is replaced by the self-imposition, endorsed by students and reinforced by the state, of political or cultural conformity. Heidegger was exceptional only in his celebrity: the great majority of German academics collaborated, many of them enthusiastically. Jews were sooner or later forced out—so were anti-Nazis and indeed any others who refused to conform. The long-term effect on academic life was of course catastrophic. Before 1933, German universities were universally admired and imitated; today, more than seventy years after the war, the best of them ranks around thirtieth in the world. Even worse than the self-inflicted harm to academic prestige is the damage done to society. Nazi professors poisoned entire professions: Carl Schmitt’s influence on lawyers, or Werner Heisenberg’s on physicists, was incalculable.

The SS had a high proportion of members with doctorates. Today, the same is true of terrorists. The Ph.D. is not a passport to civilization; rather, it is civilization alone that confers meaning on academic qualifications. Some of our professorial prophets are wilfully detaching themselves from civilization. If universities renounce integrity in favor of ideology, their degrees lose all value. Where minds are closed, an abyss opens into which even the best of them may fall. Then we may indeed, like Max Weber, echo Dante: *Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’entrate*—“Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”

The Rhodes affair

by Nigel Biggar

Shortly before Christmas 2015, Oriel College announced its intention to remove a plaque commemorating its controversial benefactor, Cecil Rhodes, and to stage a “listening exercise” about dismantling his statue, which overlooks Oxford’s High Street. Lobbied by the local manifestation of South Africa’s Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement, the college publicly repudiated Rhodes’s “colonialist” and “racist” views, claiming that they stand in “absolute contrast” to “the values of a modern university,” not least diversity and inclusion.

Seven weeks later, however, Oriel made an abrupt U-turn. In the wake of an overwhelmingly hostile reaction in the press and from alumni, together with the desertion of some donors, the college reversed its position. Instead of removing the plaque and the statue, it resolved merely to add an explanation of historical context. “The College believes,” it announced, “the recent debate has underlined that the continuing presence of these historical artifacts is an important reminder of the complexity of history and of the legacies of colonialism still felt today. By adding context, we can help draw attention to this history, do justice to the complexity of the debate, and be true to our educational mission.”

That was the right and reasonable stance to take, and the very good news is that Oriel College got there in the end. The bad news is that it nearly didn’t. And that fact bears some reflection. Why was it that the Governing Body of an Oxford college—replete with very highly educated and experienced adults—came so

close to capitulating to the shouty zealotry of a small group of students?

Of course, if the proponents of RMF are correct about the past, if “imperialism” and “colonialism” were simply and grossly evil and Rhodes simply and grossly wicked, then the Fellows of Oriel should have capitulated. Whereas we ought to tolerate the public celebration of morally ambiguous heroes—those being the only kind available to us—we probably shouldn’t tolerate human manifestations of the Devil incarnate.

So were the student supporters of RMF correct? Did they get their history right? Was Cecil Rhodes diabolical?

The case against him was this: that he held black Africans in contempt as racially inferior; that he sought to abolish their voting rights in the Cape Colony; that he supported racial segregation and laid the foundations of the policy of apartheid; that he promoted forced labor and reduced miners in his diamond mines to slaves; that he invaded and stole the ancestral lands of the Ndebele; and that he promoted genocide against them (and the Afrikaners). In short, Rhodes was South Africa’s Hitler.

I have refuted these charges at length elsewhere (“Rhodes, Race, and Empire,” *Standpoint*, March 2016). Here let me focus for a few minutes on the quotation attributed to Rhodes and deployed by RMF in its petition to Oriel to substantiate some of the main charges: “I prefer land to niggers . . . the natives are like children. They are just emerging from bar-

barism . . . one should kill as many niggers as possible.” This was taken verbatim from either a 2010 essay or a 2006 book review from which the essay draws. The author of both is Adekeye Adebajo, a former Rhodes Scholar, who is now the executive director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town.

If all (or much) of this were true, then Rhodes would surely deserve to fall from public grace. But it’s not. The “quotation” is, in fact, made up from three different quotations drawn from three different sources. The first was lifted from an 1897 novel by Olive Schreiner, who oscillated violently between worshipping Rhodes and loathing him: it is fiction. The second was misleadingly torn from its proper context. And the third is a mixture of distortion and fabrication.

With the fiction I will deal no further.

But what should we make of “the natives are like children. They are just emerging from barbarism”? It’s true that Rhodes thought that black Africans were generally inferior to the British in terms of cultural development. He had good reason to think that. After all, whether in terms of science or technology or communications or commerce or liberal political life, late-nineteenth-century Britain was many, many miles ahead of any indigenous southern African society. And in important respects British civilization was morally superior, too. Just as we twenty-first century moderns react with moral indignation against forced marriage, the honor-killing of women, capital punishment without fair trial, militaristic society, slavery, and the wicked cruelty of despots, so our Victorian Christian forebears railed against the abominable practices of the Zulu and Ndebele.

Nevertheless, Rhodes believed that black Africans could become civilized. He did not regard them as biologically inferior. This is important, because if one regards a people as biologically inferior and incapable of development, then that is a reason to exclude them permanently from participation in their own government. But that was not how Rhodes saw things. In a speech of 1894 he made this quite clear: “Now, I say the natives are children. They are just emerging from barbarism. *They have human minds . . .* We ought to do

something for the minds and the brains that the Almighty has given them. *I do not believe that they are different from ourselves.*” (Note what Dr. Adebajo chose not to include in the second part of his composite quotation.)

Which brings us to the most damning quotation—“one should kill as many niggers as possible”—which is the main ground of the charge that Rhodes was South Africa’s Hitler. The earliest source for this, however, is Dr. Adebajo’s book review of Paul Maylam’s 2005 biography in the *Times Literary Supplement* (July 28, 2006). Not one of Rhodes’s several dozen biographies reports it, not even Maylam’s.

A similar quotation—though *ad hoc* rather than general in form and lacking the word “niggers”—does appear in Gordon Le Sueur’s 1913 biography, which Maylam cites. The setting is the 1896 Matabele War. The Company’s men have just discovered that the Ndebele are about to launch another attack, shortly after losing a previous battle. On asking how many of the enemy had been killed in the first encounter, Rhodes is told that very few had been, since they’d thrown down their arms and begged for mercy. Then Rhodes (reportedly) responds, “Well, you should not spare them. *You should kill all you can*, as it serves as a lesson to them when they talk things over at their fires at night.” In other words, “Next time don’t give quarter, but kill all you can. Otherwise, they’ll only come back to attack again.”

Whatever moral evaluation one makes of this advice—given on the battlefield of a conflict undisciplined by any international laws of war—it is a world removed from a recommendation of a general policy of genocide aimed at black Africans. Therefore the allegation that Rhodes said “One should kill as many niggers as possible” is a false claim, which appears to be based on a sexed-up version of Le Sueur’s report—a version that has been completely abstracted from its historical context and to which the word “niggers” has been added.

Cecil Rhodes was no Hitler. But nor, of course, was he a St. Francis. Convinced that the extension of British rule was commensu-

rate with human progress, Rhodes was disposed to let his lofty ends justify recourse to dubious means, both in business and in politics.

Moreover, as a typical entrepreneur he was an impatient man, who preferred founding things to managing them: hence his culpably negligent delegation of the administration of Matabeleland in 1893–96. And his impatience sometimes made him a reckless gambler, most notoriously in his support for the fateful Jameson Raid.

Further still, for most of his life (up until 1896) Rhodes's overriding concern was the reconciliation of Afrikaner and Briton within the British Empire. This was an entirely reasonable concern, since tension between them had broken out into open war in 1880 and would do so again in 1899. Since one of the bones of contention was the Afrikaner ill-treatment of black Africans, however, the price of reconciliation—at least in the short term—was the compromise of native interests. And this Rhodes was willing to pay, arguably, too often.

To his credit, however, although Rhodes succeeded in becoming extraordinarily rich while still a young man, he wasn't fixated on wealth for its own sake. He didn't use it to feather his own nest or that of his kin. He tended to live quite frugally and didn't build himself multiple palaces. He wanted money in order to give him the power to realize his political purposes—namely, the economic development of southern Africa and the reconciliation of its warring parts within the British Empire. He used his riches and his power for public, not private, ends. If only the same could always be said of her current rulers, South Africa today would be a much happier place.

What's more, Rhodes's achievement in developing southern Africa's economy was prodigious: in addition to helping establish the diamond and gold industries, and reforming the banking system, he was assiduous in promoting progressive agriculture, establishing fruit farms, and extending railway and telegraphic communications.

Finally, his color-blind scholarship scheme has become the most famous and prestigious

educational programme of its kind, creating a global community of public leaders with a common root in one of the Western world's leading sites of higher learning.

I have dwelt on the history in order to demonstrate that the grounds on which the Rhodes Must Fall activists demanded the purging of public space of any sign of Rhodes are at very least un-nuanced and at very worst fraudulent. This raises a question about the content of university education. The activists were members of one of the world's most prestigious seats of higher learning, and their leaders had all been admitted to postgraduate study. Had these students not been taught to read texts—especially the messy text of human history—with close and careful attention? Had they not been trained to proportion claim strictly to evidence? Had they not been warned to beware of their own biases and not to rely on a single congenial source? Had they not been told that academic virtues apply outside the classroom, too? Apparently not. So what were their teachers doing?

The second remarkable feature of the RMF activists is that the truth about the past was of no interest to them. I made my views known in public in the London *Times* newspaper in December, in an Oxford Union debate in January, and in *Standpoint* magazine in March. No one at all, let alone any RMF member, has challenged my account then or since. The truth about the past, and the duty to do justice to it, is of no interest at all. History is merely an armory from which to draw politically useful weapons.

But useful in what cause? On the day that the RMF students presented their petition to Oriel, I observed about eighty of them gathered outside the college. Before their leader led them in rehearsals of ritual chanting, she exhorted everyone who had been “victimized” by Oxford University to raise their hands. One hand shot up, followed by three uncertain ones. A prominent complaint was that Oxford's curricula are too white and male. To which the sensible retort is, “Well, that might be true. So tell us which texts you think should go, which texts should replace them, and why

the latter are better than the former.” To my knowledge, no such substantial proposal was made at the time, nor has any been forthcoming since. The quantity of adamant indignation dramatically outstrips the paucity of grievance. What, then, explains the gap? It is hard not to fill it with ambitious egos lusting for the limelight as Radical Crusaders.

A third feature of the RMF group was that they comprised a small minority. Just over 2,000 people signed up in support. On the generous assumption that they were all Oxford University students, that amounts to about 10 percent of the student body. They were a small minority, but an intimidating one. During the Oxford Union debate, every statement by an RMF proponent met promptly with a storm of cheers and applause. If you were not paying attention, you would have thought that the audience was overwhelmingly supportive of RMF. But at one moment I decided to look rather than listen, and I observed that, during the storm of applause, most of those present were actually sitting on their hands. In the days after the debate, several students went out of their way to tell me that they had felt inhibited from expressing dissent.

Which brings us from students to dons. RMF was seriously wrong about the past, and unbelievably arrogant in its present self-certainty. I am told that, when they presented their petition, they refused even to look upon the Fellows, lest they countenance the college’s reluctance to repent. Nevertheless, instead of doing their pedagogical duty and insisting that the students enter into a responsible, rational discussion, Oriel’s dons capitulated. Why?

I can only speculate, since I was not there. But speculation need not be uninformed. Maybe a handful of Fellows shared the students’ ideological zeal, being absolutely convinced that “imperialism” and “colonialism” are synonymous with racist contempt and the grave

violation of human rights, and that Rhodes, being an avowed imperialist, was surely guilty of both. Others, less dogmatically trammled but no more historically expert, were caught in the headlights of ideological abstractions such as “imperialism,” “colonialism,” and “racism”—all of them heavy-laden with negative moral evaluations—which cannot currently be interrogated in public without attracting instant outrage and considerable risk to one’s moral reputation.

Notwithstanding this dismal chapter, there were hopeful elements, and the story as a whole had a happy ending. From the beginning there was a brave minority of Oriel Fellows who argued against capitulation. Eventually, after reflection provoked by the debate in the press—and not just because of donor-desertion, as the *Daily Telegraph* reported—a majority of dons voted to not capitulate. Meanwhile, both the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor of the University spoke out strongly against the doctrine of “safe spaces” and in favor of adult exposure to irritating difference as an opportunity to flex the muscles of liberal tolerance.

Thankfully, therefore, the tale turned out to be comic rather than tragic. But what is its moral? One candidate is this. Most people were not persuaded by RMF’s case, but, feeling unsure of their grounds, they kept their mouths shut. So the zealous certainty of a minority tied the tongues of an uncertain majority. If that is not to be repeated, then the majority need to be given greater confidence that what they *think* can be *said* in public without risking social death, because they are not, in fact, alone in thinking it. Hence the vital public role of magazines such as *Standpoint* and *The New Criterion*, not only as sources of politically incorrect viewpoints, but also as springs of dissident courage.

New poems

by William Logan, Ashley Anna McHugh
& Jodie Hollander

Spring, spring

The greens leaf out again, frilly scribbles
of fan the sky fills in, won back by masquerade,

full of newfangled evidence.

Call it quits, say the uneven stones of the cemetery.

We have not gotten this far by obedience.

The scale of gardens is jungle made weed,

boulders of New England tuned to rubble.

We long for spring to turn on us,

the mockingbird recalling our old allegiances,
all summer the neighbors' windows barred.

Only winter leaves them naked again.

—William Logan

After the miscarriage

You say, *We're doing everything we can.*
A long parade steadies itself in the street
as it circles back to end where it began.

Our hometown queen waves slow, her paper fan
sways softly in the lazy summer heat.
You tell me we'll do everything we can—

but today, on Channel 5, the weatherman
predicted it would rain for five days straight.
We circle back to end where we began:

Blown dandelion seeds, another plan
becomes a tooth in the lion's maw. *Repeat
this fact*, you say, *We're doing what we can.*

Rolling down windows in the minivan,
old vets throw candy to the crowd. We wait
to circle back, to end where we began.

On leafy avenues, as children, we ran
faster and farther from the garden gate,
now rusted shut. We're doing what we can.
But love, it never ends where it began.

—*Ashley Anna McHugh*

Ruts

After Rimbaud

These ruts must be from the horses,
the blue-black mares moving through
my dreams each night, and bringing wind
and rain and pebbles along with them—
and I know that they are real because I've
seen them. The first time was on a carousel,
we were in Paris, and I was just a girl,
and they were all brightly painted ponies
with gilded harnesses and goofy-looking teeth.
How badly I wanted to climb on for a ride
along with all the other happy children.
But I looked around and could not find
my parents; instead I kept hearing that strange
carnival music, as the same horses went
round and round and round and round and
round. And I could not help but look up at
those mirrors, reflecting a distorted version
of me back to myself, over and over again.

—*Jodie Hollander*

Letter from Florence

After the Great Flood of Florence

by *Marco Grassi*

Were Italians to identify one monument in their culturally and linguistically diverse nation as representing its valhalla—the locus of their fatherland’s identity—it would be the great conventual Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence. Begun at the end of the thirteenth century during the meteoric rise of the Franciscan Order, the giant Gothic structure is surrounded by equally imposing monastic outbuildings and cloisters, as well as that jewel of Early Renaissance architecture, Filippo Brunelleschi’s Pazzi Chapel. The nave, transept, and chapels of the basilica tell a capsule story of Italian art—from Cimabue to Canova—while, lining those same walls, rows of tombs and cenotaphs recall human achievement in all its manifestations: from Dante to Alfieri, from Michelangelo to Galileo, and from Leonardo Bruni to Gioachino Rossini. Santa Croce is really more a pantheon of greatness than a church. Its nineteenth-century façade, a symbol of ecumenical inclusiveness, was financed in great part by an English Protestant magnate, Sir Francis Joseph Sloane, and prominently bears a Star of David in tribute to its Jewish architect, Niccolò Matas.

Just as I and most of my fellow Florentines were only dimly aware that Santa Croce’s façade was a Victorian pastiche, so too did we barely realize that the basilica was built on land far below the high-water level of the nearby Arno River. This fact, however, was startlingly revealed to us and the rest of the world on the morning of November 4, 1966, when that level was hugely surpassed as the Arno suddenly overflowed its banks and protective parapets,

roaring into the city with an avalanche of mud, organic detritus, and heating oil—a churning emulsion of filth. Although at the time, my family’s home was only a stone’s throw across the river from Santa Croce, I was not in Florence to witness the unfolding disaster. I learned about it on the radio as I began my workday at the Villa Favorita in Lugano, Switzerland. For the previous two years, I had been serving there as visiting conservator for the great collection of Baron H. H. Thyssen-Bornemisza, dividing my time with a private conservation practice I continued in Florence. The enormity of the cataclysm was progressively revealed in newscasts as I struggled to reach the stricken city by car over the next twelve hours—normally, in those days, a five-hour drive. Though by the evening of the fourth the flood had mostly receded, the devastation it caused in Santa Croce and other low-lying areas of the city and countryside was catastrophic. The great Franciscan basilica, its cloisters, and surrounding neighborhoods had been submerged to an average depth of eighteen feet. Even in areas where the flood had failed to reach such dramatic levels, the raging torrent, with its sheer force and headlong speed, left in its wake a nightmare landscape of utter chaos and destruction. Thousands of gallons of heating oil had mixed with the churning waters, everywhere revealing horribly soiled surfaces as the flood subsided.

Not surprisingly, each anniversary of that fateful event is somberly remembered in Florence. With this recent fiftieth recurrence,

however, it became more of a national and even international commemoration. Much reported here and abroad was the reinstallation, in the Refectory adjoining the basilica of Santa Croce, of a huge depiction of *The Last Supper* by Giorgio Vasari, the mid-sixteenth century painter, architect, and author of the celebrated *Lives*. It was an apt commemorative gesture since the Vasari was billed as the last remaining flood-ravaged work to be replaced on public view after restoration. The *Last Supper* panel (in fact, five separate sections of poplar measuring a total of over six by eighteen feet) was originally commissioned for a nearby Carmelite convent. With the suppression of many cloistered religious communities in the nineteenth century, the huge painting was put on deposit at Santa Croce. Here, in the late 1950s, a place was finally found for it in a cramped, rather dark space adjoining the Chiostro Grande as part of a projected museum complex. And it was here, a day after the flood, that I encountered *The Last Supper* still bolted to the wall in a room where the water had just recently reached to the ceiling.

Having apprenticed at the Uffizi “Gabinetto del Restauero” several years earlier, I was known well enough by my older colleagues there to be put in charge of a small group of volunteers. We and other “first aid” intervention squads were dispatched as the need arose—and Santa Croce was immediately identified as the highest of priorities. Of these, by far the most important, not only in Florence but also in the entire Arno basin, was the great painted *Crucifix* by Cimabue. Dating from the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the imposingly large and poignant devotional image has always been regarded as a milestone in the early development of Italian art. After the last war, it spent about a decade in the Uffizi before being returned in 1958 to Santa Croce, the church for which it was originally created. At that point, however, rather than being placed on the main altar, the great cross was hoisted high on a wall in the Refectory. Tragically, it proved to be not high enough: the waters of November 4 submerged the panel nearly to the top and, by the time the feverish

work of detaching it from the wall and laying it down had been completed, large portions of the painted image had forever disappeared. The Cimabue *Crucifix* became the symbol of the Great Flood. The most seasoned and experienced conservators of the Gabinetto were deployed in an effort to save this touchstone of Italian art. At the same time, the Vasari, in its small nearby room, received its emergency ministrations from a young operative just arrived from Switzerland and not even on the Gabinetto staff. Not surprisingly, the formidable task of restoring the *Crucifix* was the first to be undertaken and the first to be completed. In 1982, the Cimabue, in its now fragmentary state, was shown abroad and even made a fleeting appearance at the Metropolitan. Meanwhile, Vasari’s *Last Supper*, a victim of its immense size and perceived marginal artistic value, languished.

Like all the other affected panels—even the *Crucifix*—the Vasari was subjected to a first emergency intervention that consisted in “papering” the surface to protect the color layer. The practice is one of conservation’s most well-established and widely employed techniques. It consists in carefully applying to the painted surface small squares of wet-strength mulberry paper with an adhesive. The “patch” or “patches,” once dried, allow an operator to safely perform consolidation in areas where blistering, fragmentation, and other deformations have occurred without fear of further losses to the pictorial layers. The preferred adhesive for “papering” has traditionally been a light, water-soluble animal glue that penetrates adequately, dries rapidly, and is easily removed at the end of the procedure. In the wake of the flood disaster, Uffizi conservators were, however, instantly faced with a major and obvious problem: with the support and painted layers of the affected paintings still damp, the preferred adhesive used for “papering” could not possibly function. A new substance needed to be chosen that would dry in high-humidity conditions. Not only had this substance to be suitable for the task, but it also had to be used in the vast “papering” undertaking—immediately. This urgency was obvious to the conservators be-

cause, if the painted panels were allowed to dry unprotected, the wood supports would shrink rapidly and dramatically, causing further havoc to the images.

The decisions, after consideration of these stark realities, were taken in a climate of near panic, though surely with the best available knowledge. The first and most significant of these decisions was the choice of adhesive for the “papering.” Rome’s Central Institute for Conservation had been testing for several years a synthetic resin developed by the Philadelphia firm Rohm & Haas, known by the trade name “Paraloid.” It is a polymer plastic, soluble in toluene. Unlike natural resins such as dammar or mastic that have been used for centuries, this material—technically a methacrylate—is highly resistant to atmospheric and environmental deterioration. Such stability is much appreciated by conservators and, by the mid-1940s, the resin was quickly adopted in American studios, particularly as a varnish. In 1966, after receiving Rome’s blessing, Paraloid was just becoming fashionable in Italy as the “last word” but decidedly not at the Uffizi Gabinetto del Restauro, still very much a bastion of traditional conservation methods and materials. Nonetheless, large quantities of the synthetic resin were commandeered elsewhere and rushed to the city. Amazingly, by the fifth of November, the appropriately prepared adhesive was already in the hands of volunteer teams such as mine. We were quickly at work, applying it to hundreds of square feet of antique painted surface, all over the city.

The Cimabue *Crucifix*, although the focus of the senior conservators’ most urgent attentions, suffered infuriating delays in being lowered from the wall and placed in a horizontal position—on a series of creaky wooden chairs hastily arranged to receive it. Fortunately, the loss of color on the gigantic *Last Supper*, due to its more robust support and the execution in oil medium, was not nearly as dramatic as with the Cimabue, done in egg tempera. No attempt was made to detach the panel from the wall. The “papering” therefore, had to proceed in a vertical position, resulting in a very uneven distribution of adhesive over the surface; after

all, this was a little-known Vasari and could be left as it was for the time being, with a relatively inexperienced practitioner in charge.

As papering of the seemingly endless number of panel surfaces continued *in situ*, the second important decision taken after the flood was beginning to be implemented: transfer of the works to places where slow and controlled dehumidification of the panels could take place. “Slow” and “controlled” were the watchwords here. The carefully planned strategy was to proceed gradually in consolidating the surfaces with conventional glue adhesives as the wood supports were slowly drying, thus regaining their original configuration and size. The process also called for the simultaneous removal of the papers and the methacrylate resin with which they were applied. In order to do this successfully, the panels had to remain in a horizontal position. While this, at first, posed significant logistical hurdles in terms of space, adequate locations were soon found in the various greenhouses of the Boboli Gardens as well as those of other Granducal villas. Within a few months of the massive relocation effort, the Uffizi personnel began to suspect that the strategy they had intended to follow might not be going as planned. Maintaining and controlling humidity levels in these new environments proved to be a far more daunting task than imagined. Serious problems began to appear in the most vulnerable of the panel paintings’ components: their gesso (gypsum) ground or priming. Such preparative layers are common to all Italian panel paintings whether executed in tempera or oil. They are generally quite thin, bound with animal glue, and hygroscopic (water-sensitive). Exposed to prolonged humidity, glue progressively loses its binding properties but, more seriously, is prone to mycological (fungal) decomposition. Such deterioration could be fatal to the continued structural integrity of a majority of the affected paintings.

A further complication also became evident. The molecular structure of Paraloid is more complex and “heavier” than that of the natural resins traditionally used by painters and conservators. This is, in fact, what accounts for the synthetic resin’s much-praised stabil-

ity, light-fastness, and permanence. But it also requires more efficient, or “stronger,” solvents (such as toluene) to be diluted for normal use. Since, with time, all resins, both natural and synthetic, have a tendency to become progressively less sensitive to solvent action, the Uffizi conservators were now confronted with the excruciating prospect of trying to remove a hardened layer of paper and resin from paintings whose structures were deformed and severely weakened. Clearly, the sooner this could be accomplished, the better; an ominously impelling issue of time was again at hand.

The only reasonable course of action left for the harried Gabinetto staff was to determine for each painting a “rating” according to historical significance, state of conservation, age, and size. In effect, it became a kind of artistic triage whereby certain works, such as the Cimabue, went to the head of the line while many others languished in the dangerous limbo of the Boboli greenhouses. These were finally emptied when it became obvious that the numerous remaining panels would be at risk of ever greater deterioration if humidification continued. *The Last Supper* was put aside, semi-forgotten, and at the very end of the line. It was not retrieved from storage until eleven years ago when a full evaluation of its state was at last performed. By then, most of the pictorial layers were adhering to the facing papers rather than to the panel; much of the color had detached from both and was irretrievably lost. The wisdom of those early decisions, so hastily taken, was seriously open to question.

On a positive note, however, the Great Flood had caused much to change in Florence in the intervening decades, none more than in the field of fine arts conservation. The cramped quarters of the old Gabinetto del Restauro behind the Loggia dei Lanzi at the Uffizi was closed, and so were various associated studios in other locations. All painting conservation activities were unified under the aegis of the still-surviving Medici gemstone workshops, the “Opificio delle Pietre Dure” (OPD). This new entity bearing an ancient name was now assigned much expanded and refurbished premises in the “Fortezza

da Basso,” the sixteenth-century military bastion designed by Michelangelo. The reborn Opificio was endowed with every imaginable contemporary diagnostic and technical tool as well as a steady flow of funding, some from corporate and foundation sources. Shortly after the “Fortezza” workshops opened, Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza, the collector for whom I worked for many years, generously underwrote the costs of a new, state-of-the-art woodworking shop. The tradition-bound artisan-restorer’s atelier of the Gabinetto was rapidly transformed into an up-to-the-minute conservation facility.

It was in 2006, at the Opificio, where the task of piecing back together Vasari’s *Last Supper* began. The timing was right because, by then, new materials and techniques that had not been available forty years earlier could be tested and applied. It was, nonetheless, Florence’s unmatched and age-old tradition of sophisticated carpentry that was fortunately still alive and, in this instance, proved crucial. The various sections of the huge panel were found to be hideously warped, shrunk, and split. What was left of the painted layers was mostly attached to the resin-hardened papers rather than to the wood support. Nothing could be done until this support regained a degree of planar coherence and stability. This was accomplished by a small team of superlative craftsmen who “opened” the panels by painstakingly inserting myriad thin strips of poplar into channels chiseled into the body of the original wood. Once the panel support had been restored to a semblance of its original self, a new ground layer was applied and made ready to receive the gigantic jigsaw puzzle that the color layers had become. Considerable wizardry in organic chemistry was needed to resolve the problem of softening the aged layer of methacrylate resin so that the color layers could be separated from the papers. The principal tool for this procedure was endless patience—more than five years of it!—plus a generous helping hand from the “Panel Painting Initiative” of the Getty Foundation.

The completion of the *Last Supper* project marked the closing chapter of the Great Flood

saga. With much fanfare, the painting was returned from the Opificio delle Pietre Dure to Santa Croce for dedication on November 4, the very day of the tragic event fifty years prior. There was no shortage of other commemorations in the city, but the Vasari was firmly at center stage, described as a “masterpiece” and its restoration as a “miracle.” The President of the Republic, the Mayor, and Matteo Renzi, the former mayor and prime minister, were all present, surrounded by the usual gaggle of dignitaries, large and small-bore. The huge panel now hangs in the Refectory, precisely where the Cimabue *Crucifix* suffered its fatal encounter with the waters of the Arno half a century ago (what remains of it was long since “promoted” to the basilica’s sacristy). If nothing else, the event was emblematic of how art-historical favor has shifted Vasari’s way these last decades: from a cramped, low-ceilinged space on the periphery of the courtyard, his huge panel has now migrated to the soaring grandeur of the Refectory—and from the hands of a novice conservator to the care of one of the world’s foremost museum labs.

All this would be abundant reason to rejoice, as did the press and dignitaries in perfect unison, were it not for the fact that the restored

Last Supper is further proof that, in the field of conservation, “miracles” are, at best, elusive. Vasari’s “masterpiece” is, and is destined to remain, a sorry, fragmentary shadow of itself. It would have been simply impossible for the restoration, epic and heroic as it was, to retrieve the surface, texture, and quality of a work of art that is now but a patchwork of bits and pieces. And yet such analytical considerations were hardly foremost in my mind as I stood in the Refectory for the first time in so many years. Too much had changed: the concerns of art history had evolved, and so had—dramatically—the practice of conservation itself. That private collection, once secluded in a verdant corner of a Swiss lake, was now a public foundation teeming with visitors in the center of Madrid. Most poignantly, there were no Uffizi colleagues still living with whom I could share memories of those terrible November days of 1966; they were the talented, supremely gifted craftsmen, who had devoted their lives to the care of paintings when they were then suddenly faced with this unimaginable spectacle. I remember how some at first cried, others panicked, but, eventually, all managed to gather their strengths and skills, bravely continuing for years the daunting task of retrieving what was left of their—and our—artistic heritage.

Theater

Old friends

by Kyle Smith

The actor Liev Schreiber is one of the most versatile and essential performers of our time. His stirring, boldly traditionalist Henry V in the 2003 Shakespeare in the Park production was worthy of Laurence Olivier, and in recent years he has ranged from other Shakespeare productions to the twentieth-century theatrical canon (*Glengarry Glen Ross*, *A View from the Bridge*), the small screen (*Ray Donovan*), and the large one (*The Painted Veil*). His brief appearance as Martin Baron, the former *Boston Globe* editor, in last year's Oscar-winning film *Spotlight* was a marvel of internal tension: quiet, withdrawn, seemingly distant, and yet so utterly poised that in just a few minutes of screen time he provided a fulcrum for the other major characters, all of them played by highly skilled thespians who, unlike Schreiber, sometimes could not resist reminding us that they were acting. Schreiber's ability to conceal the mechanics of what he does is consistently laudable. One looks forward with breathless anticipation to his next role: the villain in the upcoming film version of *My Little Pony*. Did I mention Schreiber's work ethic shames us all?

As the Vicomte de Valmont in the all-but-flawless production of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (at the Booth Theatre through Jan. 8), Schreiber startled me by transforming his voice from its usual husky register to a higher, reedier, more quizzical plateau that polishes the scalpel blade of Valmont's scrupulous ruthlessness. The play, a 1985 adaptation by the Briton Christopher Hampton of the 1782 epistolary novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, seems immortal. Indeed

it shows signs that it is growing younger; in 2013 the text was adapted into a series of tweets, demonstrating that a service built around the limitations of expressing oneself in 140 characters or fewer was well suited for the text's *mauvais mots*.

Schreiber's formidable opposite number is the stately six-foot actress Janet McTeer, who boasts an unforgettable Shakespeare in the Park credit of her own: In last summer's grotesque, punitive, feminist (and hence) witless desecration of *The Taming of the Shrew*, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, she played Petruchio as a sort of truck-stop lesbian who brazenly micturates upon a post before our eyes. I felt like the post. As the Marquise de Merteuil, though, McTeer is splendid: icy, caustic, controlling, always a step ahead of her savviest foe. For sport and revenge, the two aristocrats scheme to corrupt and despoil innocent others, with Valmont seducing both the silly, fawn-like virgin teen Cécile (Elena Kampouris), who is freshly emerged from a convent, and the generous, saintly Madame de Tourvel (Birgitte Hjort Sørensen). The Vicomte and the Marquise are at first complicit in their malice, but the two vipers satisfyingly turn on each other in the thrilling closing scenes.

Staged on a wonderfully evocative set that suggests a kind of stylish dissolution or shabby elegance, the second Broadway revival of the play, which has also appeared in many forms on television and in film, is expertly plotted and wickedly observant ("Like most intellectuals, he's intensely stupid"). It is timeless in its

acuity on the subject of, for instance, the coyness of women. “I kept saying no, all the time: but somehow that wasn’t what I was doing,” Cécile says of her initial tryst with Valmont. Replies Merteuil, “You’ll find the shame is like the pain: you only feel it once.” The aphoristic quality of much of the dialogue has a confidence and clarity that are especially welcome in an equivocal age: “When one woman strikes at the heart of another, she seldom misses; and the wound is invariably fatal,” says Merteuil. Rarely has the weaponizing of (consensual) sexual relations been depicted so convincingly, and so cunningly. The level of political incorrectness is exquisite.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses is much more than a glittering bauble, though; witty as the gamesmanship is, the proceedings take on a terrible gravitas late in the second act, in which Merteuil and Valmont’s cruel chess game becomes a life-and-death matter. Her machinations turn out to be even more nimble than we anticipated, and he and the audience realize in the same moment he is something more than the anti-hero of his aspirations. It’s a glorious conclusion to an immensely pleasing evening.

While younger than the Laclos novel, *War and Peace* is fairly venerable in its own right, but when was the last time you saw it presented as “electropop opera”? Such is the raiment it, or rather a small piece of it called *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*, wears at the Imperial Theatre. On a Thursday evening in November I went to this Broadway show and found myself in this Broadway show.

Following a corridor down to the rear of the theater and up a flight of stairs, I found my seats were upon a sofa located at stage right. Uncertain of my duties—would I be asked to sing?—I examined a pair of opera glasses resting on a nearby end table. “Don’t touch the props!” said an usher, bustling in to rearrange them. It occurred to me that I was myself a prop, or an extra, though I was not being paid for my services, not even with a free drink, which might have helped.

The show, taken from volume two, part five of the novel, centers on the naive, radiant, but fragile Natasha (a superb Denée Benton), who

is promised to the soldier Andrey (Nicholas Belton). While he is away at the front, she is gradually seduced by decadent Moscow society and the married rake Anatole (Lucas Steele, a hilarious scene-stealer), an acquaintance of the disillusioned, angst-ridden aristocrat Pierre (the pop-classical singer Josh Groban, about whom I cannot comment as he did not perform on the night I attended). As the entranced Natasha prepares to make a disastrous decision to elope with Anatole, her friends intervene to save her reputation and Pierre attempts to smooth things over with Anatole before having an epiphany while observing the titular celestial object.

The music and libretto of this almost entirely sung-through piece are by one Dave Malloy, a Brooklyn composer of variegated interests. According to his biography in *Playbill*, Mr. Malloy’s previous works include “*Beowulf: A Thousand Years of Baggage*, an anti-academia rock opera; *Beardo*, a retelling of the Rasputin myth; *Sandwich*, a musical about killing animals; and *Clown Bible*, Genesis to Revelation told through clowns.” Malloy’s imagination is frisky.

It’s also hectic, and more than a little undisciplined. As staged by Rachel Chavkin, one of Broadway’s most inventive directors, *Great Comet* is a dazzling experience, a madcap gallop through musical styles and motifs—now Russian folk, now rock, now dance music infused with electronic sounds—presented with a level of experimentation and energy so maniacal it is positively undergraduate. Merry actors swagger in and out shouting, downing draughts of (simulated) vodka and playing electric and acoustic guitars. Actresses clad in outfits suggesting a Weimar bordello reimaged by trash-punk designer Vivienne Westwood slither about the stage playing accordions and clarinets. Occasionally one performer or another would recline on the stage at my feet. *Great Comet* is hellbent on being entertaining, and it doesn’t fail.

Would that all of the raucousness added up to a great musical. The test is whether you are eager to listen to the songs on the way home, whether the sound transcends the staging. In the case of *Hamilton*—a similarly staggering

experience in the theater—one marvels more, not less, at the achievement when listening to the songs afterwards. Where *Hamilton* had considerable wit, historical detail, and emotionally resonant characters, Malloy contents himself with lyrics that strive merely to be aggressively matey. After all these years of commercial theater reducing everything to its level, though, waggish and informal treatment of a weighty tome is hardly daring, and being self-referential on Broadway is today nearly obligatory. Consider this passage from the prologue, which introduces the main characters in language that's less *CliffsNotes* than *My Weekly Reader* ("Anatole is hot," "Sonya is good," "Natasha is young," etc.)

And this is all in your program
 You are at the opera
 Gonna have to study up a little bit
 If you wanna keep with the plot
 Cuz it's a complicated Russian novel
 Everyone's got nine different names
 So look it up in your program
 We'd appreciate it, thanks a lot

Irving Berlin shudders. Cole Porter slaps his forehead. Stephen Sondheim pours himself a double. At times, *Great Comet* seems to be a response to a dare: Recast *War and Peace* in words of two syllables or fewer. There's whimsical, and there's inane, and *Great Comet* at times confuses the two.

A bit east of the Imperial Theatre on West 45th Street, dotage is being celebrated rather than disguised as adolescence. *Oh, Hello* (at the Lyceum Theatre through Jan. 22) is a micro-targeted satire of a peculiar sub-species native to Manhattan's Upper West Side. Its members are old men, shabby of dress, loud of voice. Sexual orientation and source of income (if any) are unknown. Often these men are observed conducting strange arguments at the diner or the deli or upon the park bench. When attended closely they frequently reveal themselves to be mavens in one surprising field or another, thoroughly conversant in horticulture or the novels of E. M. Forster or (most commonly) the theater. Generally one doesn't take much

notice of them except to smile noncommittally and hand over the requested item when asked, "Yer through with yer Arts & Leisure section?" but the playwrights and actors Nick Kroll and John Mulaney have keenly observed these specimens in the wild and organized their notes into an often hilarious comic presentation.

I should caution you that the play is as spoty as a Dalmatian with chicken pox: Though it has many brilliant comic insights, just as often the jokes fall flat. The actors rely, for instance, on mispronouncing words in silly ways and sometimes hug their jokes to the point of asphyxiation, such as in a bit about an enormous tuna sandwich that inspires the (intentionally bizarre) comedy catchphrase "too much tuna." Moreover, those who haven't logged a substantial amount of time in New York City risk being baffled. Kroll and Mulaney's types—Gil Faizon and George St. Geegland are their respective names—haven't previously inspired many writers of popular culture, and even those who have seen hundreds of New York-centric films and television shows will likely be unfamiliar with the exact breed (although if you picture the later work of Walter Matthau, Art Carney, or George Burns, you'll have a rough idea). This must be the least tourist-friendly play to hit the boards in years. Not that "play" is exactly the right term; it's more of a vaudeville performance, a sort of two-man comedy act performed in character with only the slightest wisp of a through story, about George's role in Gil's biggest disappointment—his failure to win the job of the voiceover actor who says, "This is CBS." Gil's creative breakthrough was to read the line thus: "This is CBS, baby!"

The portrayal of the milieu is at times priceless. The Upper West Side, says George, in a reference to a wan little shop of many years' persistence, is where "There's like a Judaica store that's always closed." Throwaway lines have the zing of smart observational comedy: "The mood is familiar but something's different—like when your housekeeper brings her son." The strange pride New Yorkers take in revisiting the horrors of the 1970s gets a nod: "Late 1970s New York is a bankrupt, crime-ridden mess and it's awesome. Tires roll down

the street on fire and inside those tires? Babies with knives.” Kroll and Mulaney have an ear for cliché; relentlessly they mock the habit of film directors to signal 1960s unrest by playing the opening chords of the Buffalo Springfield single “For What It’s Worth,” and two days after I saw the play, I heard that same song shamelessly deployed in exactly that way in yet another movie (*American Pastoral*, directed by Ewan McGregor from the Philip Roth novel).

There are out-of-nowhere references to old TV commercials, rueful remarks about the uncertain status of the theater in the wider culture (“Theater is the hot new thing right now. There’s *Hamilton* and no other examples”), bits of absurdism and cheerful non-sequiturs. Noting that in a celebrated 2000 Broadway production of *True West*, the actors John C. Reilly and Philip Seymour Hoffman alternated playing the two lead roles, George and Gil say they paid homage to the feat by alternating medications. Gil: “I would take George’s anti-psychotics.” George: “And I would apply Gil’s eczema cream.” Not everyone is batty enough to make such lines funny, but Mulaney and especially Kroll are. A Yiddish term for grumbling, fumbling old men is one that comes readily to hand: George and Gil are alte kockers.

I happen to like alte kockers and so do Kroll and Mulaney, both still in their thirties. Their

satire is imbued with appreciation. Such is the general air of merriment in their portrayal that the audience doesn’t even stop chuckling, much less gasp, when we learn by way of background that George, in his zany way, seems to have murdered his wife. Gil, ever the pal, helped George evade justice for this act, posing as the deceased spouse for the purpose of confusing the police. “I got to wear a dress!” exclaims Gil. “Why he chose to wear a dress for a phone call, we’ll never know,” adds George.

The point is that those anonymous geezers in corduroys and dirty sneakers you see arguing semi-humorously with some hapless Asian immigrant about the price of their egg salad contain multitudes, albeit weird ones. Many a Gil and George can be found in the audience enjoying the show at the theater (one cantankerous fellow, as if in an act of one-upmanship to the portrayals on the stage, loudly delivered commentary on the general state of things to a compatriot before the curtain rose, then slept soundly throughout the performance in the seat next to mine). The sense of pride in having finally succeeded in attracting notice is palpable. If every college student and campus administrator possessed an equivalent facility to laugh at themselves, our institutions of higher learning would rest on solid foundations.

Art

Kerry James Marshall at Met Breuer

by Karen Wilkin

Black dominates the compelling, eye-testing exhibition “Kerry James Marshall: Mastry,” the largest, most comprehensive retrospective to date of the Chicago-based artist at The Met Breuer. A matte, light-absorbing, sometimes blinding black turns the paintings’ faces and figures into silhouettes and sometimes devours them, as it spreads across backgrounds, punctuates zones of chromatic color, threads through them, or sets up syncopated rhythms across the picture.¹ The history of art is full of eloquent black. Name the color and we think of the elegant clothing of Philip IV in Diego Velázquez’s images of the Spanish monarch, Ad Reinhardt’s all-but-unseeable canvases, Frank Stella’s severe Pin-Stripe paintings. We envision the velvety jacket in Edouard Manet’s portrait of Emile Zola or the coat worn by the dapper sixteen-year-old Léon Leenhoff, lounging against a table, in Manet’s *Luncheon in the Studio*. We conjure up Henri Matisse’s turning black into dazzling light. And we remember that the aged Pierre-Auguste Renoir didn’t like Matisse’s paintings, but told his young admirer that he was a “real painter” because he used black without making a hole in the canvas. Marshall, an informed student of art history, is obviously well aware of these, and many other, examples.

For Marshall, as for all these artists, black is not the absence of color, but a real, vi-

tal hue. Yet no matter how brilliantly black functions in formal terms in his work, no matter how much his use of the color makes one think about precedents in Velázquez or Manet or Matisse or even Reinhardt, this difficult hue clearly plays a very different role in his paintings than in those of his predecessors. For Marshall, the blackness of black, its resistance to being seen, becomes a potent metaphor for visibility and invisibility in modern-day African-American experience. He reminds us that invisibility extends to images of black people, in the history of Western art—a canon filled with white presences. Marshall’s declared aim has been to address that absence, to correct that imbalance.

Black dominates some of the first works we encounter in “Mastry,” among them the notably tough, notably small painting, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of His Former Self* (1980, Steven and Deborah Lebowitz). The dry, light-absorbing surface of tempera accentuates the graphic impact of the image. Only the whites of the man’s eyes, his gleaming teeth (with one missing), and his immaculate shirtfront immediately announce themselves at first viewing. Then, as our eyes adjust to nuance, we see the black fedora, the dark face, and the black-clad shoulders against the dark background. The little painting, smaller than a sheet of typing paper, is part of a series inspired by Ralph Ellison’s 1952 novel *Invisible Man*. One of the largest of these, painted in 1986, shares the book’s title.

¹ “Kerry James Marshall: Mastry” opened at The Met Breuer, New York on October 25, 2016 and remains on view through January 29, 2017.

Even more extreme than the little soi-disant self-portrait, it slowly reveals a minimally indicated nude black male, his white eyes and teeth again providing a clue to the heroic body that bends to fit the canvas, within an expanse of black so relentless that it could be read as a challenge to Reinhardt.

Skin, in the figures in “Mastry,” is almost always this Stygian hue, a saturated, flat, only slightly modulated black. Occasionally, Marshall highlights or shades black flesh to suggest mass and fullness, but for the most part he encourages the light-absorbing quality of black to turn forms into elegant shapes, sometimes deliberately sabotaging the unity of his compositions. The uniform, elusive blackness of the skin of his figures makes the color not only an arresting formal device, but also a generic indicator that creates a subliminal subtext: the uncomfortable suggestion that his personages have been and still are, for some members of our vexed society, invisible. Few of the works in “Mastry” are as hard to come to terms with, visually, as the *Invisible Man* series, with the exception of the tour de force *Black Painting* (2003–2006, Private Collection), a large—six by nine foot—bedroom interior whose blacks and blue-blacks almost escape our efforts to decipher them. But throughout, with greater and lesser degrees of legibility, Marshall insists on using the color not as a description but as an emblem of the way African Americans are often perceived.

The implications of this subtext can make the cumulative effect of “Mastry,” for all the sheer beauty, lush color, and inventive structure of its most ambitious works, somewhat overwhelming. So does the sheer size of the exhibition. It’s a complete retrospective, a joint project of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. A curatorial collaboration among Ian Alteveer of the Met; Helen Molesworth of LA MOCA; and Dieter Roelstraete, formerly of Chicago MOCA, the exhibition fills two floors of The Met Breuer with more than seventy paintings, many of them large, and about ten related works. The fully illustrated

catalogue, with essays by all three curators and Marshall himself, also includes a selection of his writings from 2000 to 2015, and excerpts from his *Rythm Mastr* drawings, a sometimes angry, sometimes wry, always incisive comic book-style narrative, begun in 1999.

The exhibition is a fitting tribute to an artist who, over the course of three and a half decades, has taught extensively and been awarded numerous awards, including a MacArthur Fellowship and an appointment by President Obama to the Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Chicago-based since 1998, Marshall was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955, moved to Los Angeles with his family at eight, and was educated at the Otis Art Institute there. In New York, the show traces the evolution of Marshall’s art from 1980 to 2015, with, among other types of work, religious paintings, portraits (almost always imaginary, despite their notable individuality), politically charged images, fantastic inventions, the occasional street- and landscape, and a sprinkling of unclassifiable experiments with different media and techniques.

Among the most striking works in the exhibition are what could be called modern-day genre scenes, presented with the size, elegance, and ambition of Grand Manner history paintings. Marshall explores African-American culture and history with the seriousness and scale reserved, in the past, for official Western history painting, ranging widely through the history of art, teasing us with oblique references, like subtle seasoning in inspired cooking. Works of this type include the stately barbershop interior *De Style* (1993, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), with its confrontational, extravagantly coiffed, silhouetted figures against a complicated background of cabinets, mirrors, photographs, reflections, and a nifty black vinyl tile floor. The painting has been discussed in relation to Hans Holbein the Younger’s full-length double portrait of Tudor-era dignitaries, *The Ambassadors* (1533, National Gallery, London), whose solemn figures, generous scale, and complex setting—not to mention

its abundant use of black—invite a provocative comparison. The famous anamorphic image of a skull in the foreground of *The Ambassadors* turns up in the foreground of a painting made almost a decade later than *De Style*, the enormous—nine by thirteen feet—*School of Beauty, School of Culture* (2012, Birmingham Museum of Art), which replaces the frontality and restraint of the protagonists of *De Style* with curvaceous, brightly dressed women who move easily in space and cluster to chat, while children romp in the foreground, against a hot-pink floor and a complicated, almost fractured background. (African-American female beauty, clothed and unclothed, is a recurring motif, throughout the show.) *Untitled (Studio)* (2014, Metropolitan Museum of Art) rings changes on the motif of the busy, inhabited interior, with its middle ground occupied by a massive worktable laden with paint jars, buckets of brushes, rags, and a skull, its surface covered with paint, that pushes figures towards the periphery. A loosely brushed portrait, in work, is on the easel; an assistant adjusts the pose of the sitter. A red curtain stretched behind the posing figure, combined with the gray-blue surroundings and a standing nude lurking in the background against stacked canvases, somehow links the painting to Henri Matisse's *Pink Studio* (1911, Pushkin Museum, Moscow), with its central curtain and multiple figures pushed to the edges, alluded to through depicted paintings and sculptures. The connection, an overtone, rather than an obvious homage, is typical evidence of Marshall's well-furnished mental image bank of the art of the past and recent past.

This is made explicit by “Kerry James Marshall Selects,” a concurrent, adjacent exhibition of works from the Met's collection, organized by Marshall and Alteveer.² Marshall's choices are strikingly eclectic. They include a Walker Evans photograph of a young, introspective African-American woman in a print blouse, a close-up

2 “Kerry James Marshall Selects” opened at The Met Breuer, New York on October 25, 2016 and remains on view through January 29, 2017.

Horace Pippin self-portrait, a Japanese “floating world” print, a group of half-length images of women by Matisse, Willem de Kooning, Balthus, John Graham, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's elongated grisaille odalisque. Most revealing, perhaps, is Marshall's selection of works by George Tooker, Jacob Lawrence, and Romare Bearden, all of them distinguished by economically rendered, preternaturally still figures who enact (sometimes) ambiguous narratives.

We remember Marshall's choices when we encounter, periodically, the exhibition's many half-length “portraits,” most of them imagined or fictive. A series, composed like Old Master paintings, of imaginary African-American painters contrasts the intense colors on their palettes and paint-by-numbers efforts with their voluptuously black skin; other equally Renaissance-inflected works pay tribute to ordinary, modern individuals, along with such charged figures as Nat Turner and the leader of the Stono Rebellion of 1739, the largest anti-slavery insurrection in the British Colonies, organized in what is now Charleston, South Carolina. These are engaging, strong images, but some of the most unforgettable works in “Mastry” are a group of large, dramatic canvases, executed between 1994 and 1997, that translate the time-honored legacy of narrative history painting into vernacular, contemporary terms, replacing the stories from antiquity, the Bible, and the heroic past beloved of Renaissance fresco painters with charged disquisitions on modern-day African-American life. Marshall presents us with barbed comments on utopian housing schemes, patriotism, and embodiments of the American Dream, so ravishingly painted, with such eloquent drawing, sensuous manipulation of pigment, gorgeous color, and lush patterning, that it takes us a while to realize that the pastoral idylls before us are not as idyllic as we thought. *The Garden Series*, for example, reminds us of the high-minded intentions of New Deal-subsidized housing. Marshall's imagery seems joyful and light-filled: an embracing couple, children at play, men in gleaming white shirts working in a garden. But fierce swipes of paint and stabbed-on patterns, at

once seductive and brutal, suggest decay and even danger. Ferocious brushstrokes obscure optimistic slogans and violate the pristine landscape, embodying, in purely painterly terms, a powerful suggestion of the future of public housing.

Marshall offers what seems to be a more affectionate, optimistic depiction of urban life in the vast *7AM Sunday Morning* (2003, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago). A hip update of Edward Hopper's tranquil streetscape *Early Sunday Morning* (1930, Whitney Museum of American Art), the painting finds equivalents for Hopper's nineteenth-century shop-fronts in a long, one-story liquor store and adjacent beauty salon that stretch across the left side of the enormous picture. A few pedestrians wander through. A pair of taller buildings looms behind, the closer one, residential and undistinguished, the more distant, sleek and corporate. The tall buildings, along with a flock of wheeling pigeons, interrupt a huge expanse of cloud-streaked sky. On the right, the cityscape is veiled by urgent, pale brushstrokes, floating (mostly black) hexagons, and a dazzle of white light—a blinding sun? a reflected flash? A blurred car suggests that the painting was based on a photograph, but why a flash in daylight? We scrutinize details of the apparently straightforward scene more closely, striving to find intimations of meaning in both the imagery and Marshall's virtuoso deployment of his materials. A comment on incipient gentrification or just an improvisation on a familiar scene?

We find ourselves searching for this kind of larger significance as we move through "Mastry," aided by wall texts, but mostly guided by the paintings themselves. Marshall's strongest work insures that the history of recent art in this country, at least, vividly reflects and celebrates the experience of African Americans. But what makes "Mastry" rewarding is not its political or sociological underpinnings, however important or timely they may be. We are engaged by inventive images, compelling drawing, expressive color, and accomplished paint-handling. Subtext or no subtext, Marshall's a terrific painter. Period.

Exhibition notes

"Agnes Martin"

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York.

October 7, 2016–January 11, 2017

"Agnes Martin," a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum of the Canadian-born painter who died in 2004 at the age of ninety-two, has the misfortune of being mounted concurrently with "Mark Rothko; Dark Palette," an exhibition at the Twenty-fifth Street branch of Pace Gallery. The comparison between Martin and Rothko would be inescapable even if the shows weren't simultaneously on display. Both painters pursued an art of distillation, exploring just how much could be jettisoned from the art of painting without altogether relinquishing its particulars. Martin was vocal in her admiration of Rothko, extolling how he had "reached zero so that nothing could stand in the way of truth." Her early work, with its sparsely applied geometries and gently stated means, owes a clear debt to Rothko's mature paintings: those hovering fields of color that radiate heat, light, and mystery. At early points in their respective careers, each painter dabbled in Surrealism and, not coincidentally, sought to uncover archetypes of symbol and form. Though less than a decade separated them—Rothko was born in 1903, Martin in 1912—we think of Martin as belonging to a different generation: Minimalism following on the heels of the New York School.

Stylistic categories are often more convenient as journalistic pegs than as accurate quantifiers, but comparing "Dark Palette" and "Agnes Martin" does underscore the difference between the heroic, if fitfully achieved, ambitions of Abstract Expressionism and the deadening certainties of Minimalism. The former approach dramatically foreshortened, but did not expunge, the allusive capabilities of art; the latter put illusionism—and, with it, metaphor—out to pasture, abjuring poetry for literalism. Whatever one may think of Rothko's tastefully deployed vision, the paintings in "Dark Palette" register as visual experiences of a high order; his exultations of color, at once portentous and otherworldly, are

hard to dismiss. Martin's art is more retiring in temperament, sparse in means, and, in the end, takes too much for granted, not least the viewer's interest. "Paintings," she wrote, "are not about what is seen. They are about what is known forever in the mind." The rub is that paintings are meant to be seen. Otherwise, why bother looking at them in the first place? The gulf that exists between Rothko and Martin lies in the distinction between close-to-nothing and almost something. If Rothko "reached zero," then Martin aspired to less.

"Agnes Martin" includes close to 120 pieces, beginning with *Mid-Winter* (ca. 1954), a lumpish array of shapes reminiscent of the American abstractionist Arthur Dove, and culminates with canvases and works-on-paper dating from the last year of the artist's life. After flirting with biomorphism, Martin settled into her signature groove: patterning—typically, grids or horizontal stripes—laid out with underplayed concision. The color palette, from the get-go, is limited. Grays and off-whites predominate, so much so that when other colors are introduced—a wan array of purples, pinks, and blues—they register as after-images. Martin's touch is most apparent in the way she handles graphite, ruling out pencil lines that all but imperceptibly stutter across the weave of the canvas or catch on the tooth of a sheet of paper. Washy runs of paint are employed late in the game, as are triangles, trapezoids, and squares—solid forms that are, in the context of Martin's pictorial equanimity, gratifyingly rude. Symmetry is the rule and the format square. Rhythm is maintained at a lulling pace. "I paint," Martin averred, "with my back to the world." The problem is that the world is where the rest of us spend our time. Martin, we realize, was painting for an audience of one: herself. It is a consummate but exclusionary body of work.

Writing in the catalogue, Briony Fer, the Professor of History of Art at University College London, notes that "to see a painting by Martin, as it is to look at a Mondrian, is to understand how repetition begets difference." After ascending the Guggenheim's ramp to follow the trajectory of Martin's oeuvre, it's worth popping into the permanent collection to consider Mondrian's *Composition 8* (1914).

Repetition did guide the artist, but did it define the art? When putting brush to canvas, Mondrian remained open to the give-and-take of the medium; repetition gives way to, and is enlivened by, the particularity of relationships. For Martin, compositional variety was hostile to the equilibrium she sought to codify. She likened her paintings to sensations engendered by contact with the natural world; meditative awe was the objective. Sweeping expanses of gray acrylic can serve as antidotes for the chaos of life, but for how long and how effectively? Repetition can get, you know, *repetitive*. To glean "difference" from the paintings is to parse aesthetic matters so fine that it's hardly worth the effort. Only those who mistake sameness for satori could sit in front of a Martin canvas without constantly checking the time.

"Zen" is a description that pops up regularly in discussions of the work. Martin did, in fact, have an abiding fascination with Eastern modes of thought, particularly that of the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu. His concept of *wu wei*—roughly translated as "action without action"—lends itself to a temperament that believed "sought out suffering is a mistake/ But what comes to you free is enlightening." But "zen-like" is a phrase best kept at arm's length; too often it is employed as an alibi for art of undernourished means and overblown pretensions. How well did Martin apply principles culled from Taoism and, for that matter, a Calvinist upbringing to life? Very well, it seems: she left the hurly-burly of Manhattan in 1967 for New Mexico, where she spent the rest of her days in relative isolation and quiet satisfaction. In that regard, Martin's example has ennobled her to any number of contemporary artists. The worry is that her work has done the same. Art that operates within such a rarefied compass admits more readily to low expectations than possibility, infinite or otherwise. Martin's art carries with it a stringent integrity, absolutely. But those seeking to tap into "the innocence of trees" are advised to pass on the Guggenheim and head to Central Park, where a stroll through its manicured environs will provide pleasures of a more expansive sort than seen in "Agnes Martin."

—Mario Naves

“Klimt and the Women of Vienna’s Golden Age, 1900–1918”
The Neue Gallerie, New York.
September 22, 2016—January 16, 2017

The Neue Galerie built “Klimt and the Women of Vienna’s Golden Age, 1900–1918” around the radiant *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (1907), embedded in the ornamented wall on its second floor. The exhibition includes an astute selection of the female portraits that Gustav Klimt completed in the mature phase of his life. The portraits were paid commissions that supported Klimt’s work on the allegorical images for which he is usually known, as well as his inimical, tessellated landscape paintings. Klimt nevertheless approached them with the utmost artistic seriousness. A suite of his preparatory drawings fills the anteroom. (Klimt painted slowly, but drew prolifically.)

The Neue has a winner of a concept here and could have done with a simpler show. That it produced a 400-page monograph for an exhibition of, essentially, a dozen paintings tells you what happened instead. There are hats and dresses by the contemporary artist Brett McCormack on mannequins stationed around the rooms. Klimt’s companion, the fashion designer Emile Flöge, ostensibly inspired them. The argument is that Klimt influences the art of the present, but the effect is trivializing, just as when one of the catalogue authors detects a visual relation between Klimt’s *Japoniste* backgrounds and the overrated work of Kehinde Wiley.

The catalogue delves further into Art-Nouveau jewelry and furniture, Klimtesque couture by Oscar de la Renta and others, and photographs of a live staging of a Klimt tableaux by Inge Prader (some of which are on display on the basement level of the museum). Interpretive mischief creeps into the voluminous page count. One essay draws an interesting connection between the history of Austrian women’s suffrage and the Vienna Secession, but its relevance is rendered questionable when the author fails to show that Klimt ever had an opinion about women’s suffrage. Another writer ventures, “Klimt may have seen Adele’s nervous gesture as a

metaphor for modern, fragile femininity. In his preparatory drawings, the artist internalized this metaphor in an incomparable way.” That may be, or perhaps Bloch-Bauer didn’t want the misshapen finger on her right hand immortalized along with her lovely face, and Klimt obliged. Meanwhile, museum-goers are literally lining up around the corner of the Neue just to look at the paintings.

The key to Klimt’s triumph was synthesis. One can see the relevant work being done in his multiple chalk studies of Bloch-Bauer, with her sitting this way and that in an armchair, sporting various outfits, and him scribbling his way to genius. Somehow, the speed and disorder of the lines only enhances the authority of the drawing. They’re like plates of capellini thrown by a Marine sniper—each chaotic strand hits its target. (The drawings in the anteroom are hung edge to edge, in some places two rows thick, in the half-light now required by conservators of works on paper, making attendance upon any of them a bit of a chore. Excluding all but the drawings of Bloch-Bauer, particularly the lovely but tangentially related nudes, would have clarified how Klimt scrutinized the interplay between person and costume, and made the whole room easier to take in.)

That hard-won familiarity is how geometry and visual turmoil harmonize in *Adele I*, as the painting references Ravenna mosaics, Egyptian gilding, and European portraiture all at the same time. But that piece is a Neue staple and you can marvel at it at your leisure. This exhibition offers a look at several privately held works and museum loans that together trace Klimt’s development. A casual viewer might mistake the *Portrait of Szerena Lederer* (1899) for a Whistler. Klimt had not yet seen a Whistler in person in 1899, making this similarity all the more astonishing. Even via reproduction he intuited that the problem of low-contrast images had something in store for him. He returned to it in *Jugendstil* form in his *Portrait of Gertha Loew* (1902), the figure hovering angelically in nacreous light within an even more attenuated rectangle.

Twelve years later, Klimt elongated the form of his subject in the *Portrait of Elisabeth*

Lederer (1914–15) still more dramatically, and he depicted Lederer and her outfit in identical colors of ice. Klimt laid her silvery form into a riot of hue: a ground plane of tangerine and carmine, a background violet and royal blue. The Chinese tapestry behind her lends her wings of flowers, as an embroidered battalion of emperor's guards and courtesans admire her like putti adoring a Madonna. Pierre Bonnard, whom we usually associate with this kind of palette and formal adventure, and who was only five years younger than Klimt, had not yet painted anything so ambitious, resolved, or delightfully weird. (Klimt died in 1918. Bonnard lived to be a much older man, and caught up.)

An unfinished *Portrait of Ria Munk III* from 1917 discloses Klimt's method, although not many artists could resolve the vigorous tangle of chalk that makes up the underdrawing. It's clearly headed towards a result like *The Dancer* (1916–17), an equilibrium of furious patterns and big geometries hung on a motif of figure, interior, and still life. Something of Whistler's formalism—the “arrangement,” as he called

it—is still operating here, but Klimt has abandoned Whistler's tonalism in favor of a visual lightning storm.

Hovering in the intellectual background of Klimt's milieu is the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the “total artwork” typified by Wagner's aspiration to use opera to unify all the other arts, additively. Klimt left the Vienna Secession over a disagreement with his colleagues about the proper form of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. (He thought that fine artists and architects ought to be included in Secession exhibitions.) But quality is a process of subtraction, not addition, as is proven when Klimt, his drawing coalescing into certainty, pares his line down to a few essential marks and lands them right on the forms he needs. The current vogue for curatorial maximalism—related in spirit to the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, though hardly particular to the Neue—clutters this exhibition with an excess of objects and overreaching claims about them. But the truest line, an exploration of Klimt's power of synthesis, is there to be discovered.

—Franklin Einspruch

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion*:

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Letter from Hungary: political polarization & private pleasures
by Paul Hollander

Gallery chronicle

by James Panero

America's cultural fault lines should have become apparent even before the seismic shock of the latest presidential election. Now we might ask what role art could play in bridging that divide. Our stratification has become increasingly unstable. Regardless of one's political views, the solution should not be greater segregation but new efforts at cultural integration.

The country's cultural division was the subject, of course, of Charles Murray's penetrating 2012 book *Coming Apart: The State of White America 1960–2010*. Here Murray observed how a “high-IQ, highly educated new upper class has formed over the last half century. It has a culture of its own that is largely disconnected from the culture of mainstream America.” To prove the point to his readership, which he assumed would largely be of this new class, Murray posed a series of questions called “How Thick is Your Bubble?” The quiz has now been widely distributed through an online version published by PBS's NewsHour. It asks questions such as whether you have ever walked a factory floor, known low academic achievers, or regularly eat at chain restaurants—experiences that might show shared experiences with working- and middle-class Americans.

The quiz should be compulsory testing for any latter-day Pauline Kael who cannot understand a political outcome so out of step with elite expectation—which was the true shock of this election. It was Kael's fate for her life's work as a film critic to become overshadowed by a single political quip: that she couldn't understand how Nixon won, because no one she knows voted for

him. That aphorism, it should be noted, turns out to be somewhat off from what Kael actually said. At a 1972 talk before the Modern Language Association, Kael remarked that “I live in a rather special world. I only know one person who voted for Nixon. Where they are I don't know. They're outside my ken. But sometimes when I'm in a theater I can feel them.” So Kael was acknowledging her own provincialism while also, perhaps, demonstrating relief at the segregation that created it—even as she could occasionally “feel” the presence of a Nixon voter in the demotic assembly hall of the American movie house.

The takeaway of Murray's study might be that we are all Pauline Kael's now, increasingly divided not by a wall but by the cultural fortifications that surround the city-states from flyover country. I say this as a critic, not unlike Kael, writing from inside the battlements. When I took Murray's latest quiz, in which lower numbers indicate greater degrees of insularity, I scored a mere eight out of a hundred—a number so impenetrably low that it falls below even the average median of 12.5 for my boyhood neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper West Side, which Murray reveals to be the “bubbliest zip code” in the United States. And I must say even as I have moved on and up (two zip codes north), most people I know still live in this “rather special world” of separatist identity that run deeper than presidential preference. It is a cultural deficiency I acknowledge, and one that I have tried to confront in this column by looking to the tributaries and backwaters of the artistic mainstream.

After all, such separation does not make good culture. It is certainly not a healthy culture, but rather one made of equal parts disdain and resentment. It is also not a rich culture, with the dynamics of America at full throttle. Just what could be done about these divisions is a question that should now be posed by our cultural institutions, our artists—and by government itself. What follows are a few possible answers.

In the museum world, one of the most successful recent examples of bridging our cultural divide has been the creation of the (appropriately named) Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, which opened in Bentonville, Arkansas in 2011. Tucked deep in Ozark hill country, with a complex designed by Moshe Safdie that spans a bubbling body of water called the Crystal Spring, the museum is a literal bridge of American art in a culturally underserved area of the country. If you haven't been there, I encourage a visit, with fifty flights a day landing in nearby Fayetteville and a boutique “museum hotel” that connects by sylvan bike paths to the institution, which should increase the comfort level of even the bluest of blue-staters.

Founded by Alice Walton, the heiress of the Wal-Mart fortune, and constructed with funds north of one billion dollars provided by the Walton Family Foundation, Crystal Bridges bucks all conventional wisdom on who, where, when, why, and what a major museum should be. “Swim upstream,” wrote Sam Walton, Alice's father, in his 1992 autobiography, published the year he died. “Go the other way. Ignore the conventional wisdom. If everybody else is doing it one way, there's a good chance you can find your niche by going in exactly the opposite direction.” By choosing to locate a new world-class museum far beyond our wealthy urban centers, Alice Walton has been an iconoclast in culture just as her father was in business, all while giving back to the hometown that still maintains the original “Walton's 5&10” (which is now also the company's museum).

Crystal Bridges's truly counter-cultural formation has also been reflected in its maverick programming—so unlike many other inland museums that operate more like colonial outposts of coastal elitism camouflaged in pan-

dering condescension. Two years ago I visited Crystal Bridges for a survey of contemporary art called “State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now,” an exhibition I covered in these pages in October 2014. In search of artists whose “engagement, virtuosity, and appeal” have gone underappreciated, the museum's director and curator hit the road on a 100,000-mile coast-to-coast visit of 1,000 artist studios. They logged 218 flights and 2,396 hours in rental cars, recording 1,247 hours of audio conversation and extensive video as they narrowed their selection down to the 102 artists to include in their 19,000-square-foot exhibition. “The vision on which Crystal Bridges was founded, and its mission today, is to share the story and the history of America through its outstanding works of art,” Alice Walton told me at the time. “That's exactly what ‘State of the Art’ is about—sharing works that are being created in artist studios all across the country, in our own time.” “The mainstream is very narrow,” added Don Bacigalupi, the museum president who spearheaded the initiative with Walton. “Our exhibition is outside the mainstream structure of the art world.” Granted, such a wide net will necessarily bring in a haul of various quality, but at least this diverse selection of contemporary American art, created in just about every corner of the country, was a refreshing departure from our art fairs and biennials. It was also an indication that we all need to hit the road.

A decade ago an artist named Scott Lobaido did just that—he went on the road to paint the American flag across fifty rooftops in fifty states. He crossed back and forth over the country nearly two times. In the process, he went broke. He was attacked by wild animals. He dodged twisters. He took a container ship to Hawaii. He slept outside on a twenty-two-hour ferry ride to Alaska. He relied on strangers for food and shelter. And as curators look to the state of political art post-election, they might consider giving equal time to the conceptual and painted work of this self-styled “creative patriot.”

A self-taught artist living just a ferry ride from the heart of the art world, LoBaido hails from that *other* New York City—the middle class, flag-waving, Republican-voting borough of

Staten Island. I first met LoBaido in September 2004, at a show of his paintings at a gallery in lower Manhattan, off Broadway, timed to the Republican National Convention (“Gallery Chronicle,” October 2004).

A year after I met him, I got word that he was in Mississippi working in the relief effort after Hurricane Katrina. He had driven a truck of supplies down from Staten Island, offering his skills in wood and paint. It was in Mississippi that LoBaido made a connection between Katrina and the other great tragedy of his life: the terror attacks of 9/11. In Mississippi, he saw a spirit of hope, renewal, and patriotism that he believed could unite people from very different worlds. He was then inspired to paint an American flag on one of the Gulfport rooftops. He donated his truck to the relief effort, and on his twenty hour bus-ride home, the idea for “Flags Across America” was born: a visible display from the ground and from the air. He said he wanted to send an artistic message to the troops flying home from war. Back home at bar on Staten Island called The Cargo Café, where he was artist-in-residence, LoBaido loaded up a 1989 Chevrolet Suburban named Betsy, a replacement gift from a friend painted in the colors of the American flag: this was the beginning of “Flags Across America.”

LoBaido’s efforts earned him a profile as “Man of the Week” on ABC News. Yet when I told his story at a conference of the College Art Association and made the case for him as a legitimate political artist, the audience, needless to say, wanted none of it. Most recently, LoBaido has made a name for himself again: this time for painting a red-white-and-blue “T”-shaped billboard in Staten Island. This sign, and his flag murals, have been the repeated targets of vandalism and arson. LoBaido’s dissent from cultural orthodoxy is not mere novelty; it is heretical, which should say much about the diversity promises of the cultural establishment. Until this changes, much of America will never see themselves reflected in those mandarin surveys of contemporary American art such as the Whitney Biennial, despite their overtures to inclusion.

Even beyond the National Endowments, there are now dozens of presidential appointments and thousands of Federal employees dedicated

to American arts and culture. The new administration could do worse than seek out the cultural analogues of those “forgotten men and women” who have become estranged from the political establishment. Moreover, the power of celebrity can bring comfort, rather than just disdain, to the culturally forsaken, such as Gary Sinise’s outreach with soldiers and veterans through his Lt. Dan Band or Dolly Parton’s efforts for childhood literacy. I have also been moved by efforts such as the Joe Bonham Project connecting illustrators with Wounded Warriors as they undergo rehabilitation, shining a light on the hidden faces of war.

A final mention should go not only to our culture’s geographic outliers, but also to those who have been aesthetically pushed aside. What I mean are to those many artists, undoubtedly a majority of the country’s artists, whose creative urge has driven them beyond the pale of narrow, establishment style. You might have your pick of this category, but it would include every artist who does not fit within the Happy Meal of Contemporary Art now served up the same way across the country (Gerhard Richter burger; Kehinde Wiley fries; Jeff Koons toy). So consider the religious artists, the plein-air painters, the formalists, the classical realists, and the many, many others now on the outside looking in.

All this will be a bitter pill for the art world to swallow. “Trump lost the art vote by a wide margin,” writes Ben Davis. A critic on the Left, Davis it should be said contributed the most comprehensive coverage of artists across the political spectrum this election season, including the activism of Scott LoBaido. “The entire cultural establishment . . . threw its weight behind Hillary Clinton (or at least against Donald Trump) in the final stretch of this campaign.” Still, Davis concedes, “mainstream culture failed to be the decisive factor where it was needed. It is even likely that this anti-Trump unanimity may have helped give a false sense of his weakness.”

Davis is right when he suggests that the “dynamic of this election should raise some critical questions on the limits of cultural activism.” It is a conclusion with which the world of culture must reckon as it considers art in the age of Trump and the best application of its creative and institutional energies in a divided landscape.

Music

New York chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

City Opera presented a new work, *Fallujah*, by Tobin Stokes. In its revived form, City Opera has been presenting in a variety of venues. *Fallujah* was staged at the Duke on 42nd Street, “an intimate, flexible, black-box theater” (according to its self-description). It is a smart place for an opera, particularly a chamber opera, which *Fallujah* is.

Stokes is a Canadian, and the composer of at least one other chamber opera: *Pauline*, whose libretto is by Margaret Atwood, the famed Canadian novelist. The opera is about Pauline Johnson, a Canadian writer and stage performer who lived from 1861 to 1913. *Fallujah*, of course, is about the Iraq War, and in particular one of its worst battlegrounds: the city of Fallujah, in Anbar Province. The opera is also about the aftereffects of the war on soldiers and others. Its libretto is by an Iraqi American from Michigan, Heather Raffo.

The temptation, in writing about this opera, is to write—and write—about the Iraq War. Yet it is an opera, and none of us should babble on too long before getting to the music.

Fallujah is based on the testimony of a combat veteran, Christian Ellis, who was a U.S. Marine in Iraq. He had been a singer before going to war. One of the effects of his combat experience was that he forgot how to sing.

The story of the opera unfolds over seventy-two hours. Philip is in a veterans hospital. He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. He has flashbacks. His mother is waiting outside, desperate to see him. We learn that she adopted Philip when he was eight (if I have heard cor-

rectly). In the list of roles, she is described as “Philip’s adopted mother,” rather than just his mother. We are made to think that this makes a significant difference—that she is less than a mother. Yet the character certainly behaves in full maternal fashion.

According to our program notes, “*Fallujah* offers a rare, operatic glimpse into the mind of a veteran struggling with” PTSD. In a program note of his own, Christian Ellis says that “*Fallujah* is the first opera composed about the Iraq War and PTSD.” There have been other pieces of music about the war. Maybe I should have “about” in quotation marks. The late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies described his String Quartet No. 3 as “an unpremeditated and spontaneous reaction to the illegal invasion of Iraq.” Yet this quartet has no words, and can be “about” whatever the listener wishes it to be.

Tobin Stokes, too, wrote a program note. “War happens when we become too dysfunctional for peace,” he says, “and art happens when we try to figure out why we’re all so dysfunctional.” The old spiritual says, “Ain’t gonna study war no more.” Maybe this composer should. Yet I feel sure his heart is in the right place. He also writes, “Over the past few years, chamber opera has become less predictable, more visceral, immediate, and more relevant.” Music circles, I have noted, are in love with the present (and therefore with themselves). The conceit is that the present is smarter and more alive than the stuffy past. Perhaps every generation has been afflicted, to some degree, by this conceit.

Before curtain at the Duke on 42nd Street, a City Opera official came out with Christian Ellis, for some talking. This was designed to “help everyone understand” the opera, said the official. He asked Ellis, “What do you hope they will take away?” In my view, that is cheating: a work of art should stand on its own, without this pre-performance steering. In any event, Ellis told us something startling: he had tried to kill himself four times. And “this opera gives you guys insight into post-traumatic stress disorder. It is very authentic.”

Fallujah has a view of the war. It is not necessarily my view, and it may not be yours. One major objection I have is this: the opera gives the impression that the Iraq War was a contest between invading, occupying Americans on one hand, and Iraqis on the other. Works of art about Vietnam make this same mistake: pitting Americans against Vietnamese (rather than Americans in alliance with some Vietnamese against other Vietnamese). In *Fallujah*, there is just one, fleeting mention of Saddam Hussein, or so I remember—this monster who had created a “republic of fear,” in Kanan Makiya’s apt and memorable phrase. Also, you might get the impression, watching this opera, that U.S. soldiers in Iraq were racist sexual predators.

I could complain on—but I remind myself of this: Christian Ellis is entitled to his own experience, his own testimony, his own memories. His own interpretation. Plus, he was there and I was not. And I should, finally, address the music, in what is after all an opera.

Stokes has written an intelligent and effective score. It is unafraid to be simple. Also, it is unafraid to employ silences. There is some rock and roll, some jazz. There is Middle Easternish music, associated with the Iraqi characters. The music is sad, quizzical, rough, tender. Toward the end, there is a big ensemble, making me think of the octet that closes Lee Hoiby’s *Month in the Country*, which itself drew from the closing quintet of Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa*. If I am reading my (scrawled) notes correctly, the opera ends on a simple unison G, sung by mother and son.

The opera runs for an hour and twenty minutes and is unrelievedly grim. I think this is perhaps a mistake—not that levity goes with PTSD. But even *Macbeth* has some relief in the

form of the porter scene (from which we apparently get knock-knock jokes). Is *Fallujah* exploitative? Well, sure, in that operas exploit their subjects. But does it cross a line, into emotional grossness? I don’t think so. I think it flirts with it without crossing it.

In the leading role of Philip was LaMarcus Miller, a bass-baritone. He sang with awareness and skill, though at times I would have liked to pull his voice forward: it tended to be contained. Delivering a superb performance was the soprano Suzan Hanson, in the role of Colleen, the mother. Her acting was not so much opera acting as acting acting. She was downright riveting. The production is in the hands of Andreas Mitisek, and it is a very good production: not trying to do too much but doing enough. In this it resembles the score, come to think of it.

I myself have no desire to see this opera a second time. But I am glad it exists, and recommend it to people who are inclined to see such an opera.

What is it about the flute and Frenchmen? The star players tend to be French, and if they are not, they are from Geneva, like Emmanuel Pahud, or from Quebec, like Robert Langevin. The latter is the principal player in the New York Philharmonic. I have enjoyed listening to him over the years. He shows the possibilities of the instrument, including its colors. Also, he has one of the great mustaches in music: a white, floppy, bushy affair. His mustache seems almost part of his instrument. That would not be the case if he were, say, a cellist.

One night with the Philharmonic, Langevin played Mozart’s Flute Concerto No. 2 in D. In the opening allegro, he was aristocratic, almost cool. I think the music could have used a touch more mirth. Also, some of the flute’s lower notes could not be heard, as with a soprano. Yet this was obviously high-class playing. And the cadenza was a particular treat. Written by Langevin himself, it is virtuosic and fitting. I bet Mozart would approve.

In the middle movement—Andante ma non troppo—Langevin exhibited lovely and pure singing. I would call it genuine bel canto. Bellini might have purred. And Langevin strikes me as a musician with unusually high standards for

himself. In the closing allegro, he was an elegant dervish. There might have been a squeak or two, but that only proved that we were not listening to a studio recording. When he finished, I thought, “What a great instrument.” That is a tribute to the demonstrator of it.

Later, after intermission, a soprano appeared: Ying Fang, the newcomer from China. I first heard her last season at the Metropolitan Opera. She was the Young Shepherd in Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*. “I heard a sound so sweet,” says the shepherd. So did I. Ying Fang was amazing to hear. Last summer, James Levine had her sing in a Mahler Second that he conducted at the Ravinia Festival, outside Chicago.

With the Philharmonic, Ying Fang sang *Exsultate, jubilate*, the beloved motet by Mozart. As the orchestra played the opening pages, she looked like she could hardly wait to sing—like it was the biggest privilege in the world to sing this music (which it is). Her first note was right on. This makes a difference in a listener’s ear, and in his brain. An imperfect first note can sour things from the beginning. As she continued the opening movement, Ying Fang was both clean and feeling. She always traveled to the center of the note. There was not a hint of portamento in this singing. Yet there was plenty of artistry. Sometimes the words could have been clearer, and Ying Fang did not show much of a lower register. But these problems were insignificant.

The recitative, she sang musically, not just rattling off words. In the aria “Tu virginum corona,” she was notably small-voiced, but she did not force, which was wise. She was tender and angelic in this music—but not namby-pamby. The aria had a beautiful prayerful quality. And the closing “Alleluja” was incisive and joyous—with Ying Fang relishing every moment.

She is at the beginning of her career, and may never be better. The word “prime,” remember, relates to “first.” I’m going to tell a sorry truth, and please don’t shoot the messenger: singers are often best at the beginning of their career, and are booked for thirty years regardless, based on their initial wonderfulness. May Ying Fang be wonderful for a long time to come. I imagine she will be.

This concert was an all-Mozart concert, conducted by Bernard Labadie, who, like Robert

Langevin, is from Quebec. He is a well-known Baroque specialist. He began the evening with Mozart’s Symphony No. 31 in D, “Paris.” Immediately, he was authoritative. And so he remained. The Andante movement of this symphony had an interesting quality: it was conversational, smoothly so. Mozart brought a lot of happiness on this evening, as he typically does.

Fazil Say is a lover of Mozart, and one of his best friends in music. Indeed, Say has just recorded the complete piano sonatas of Mozart. With the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in Carnegie Hall, he played a Mozart concerto, that in C major, K. 467. He played his part with character, panache, suavity, and glee. He brought his own cadenzas, and they were a hoot—ingenious hoots.

I often speak of pianists who “roll their own”—who write their own music, such as cadenzas, arrangements, novelties, encores. Fazil Say is more than a roller of his own: he is a bona fide composer. He has many works, of various kinds, to his credit, and that includes the piano concerto he played with the Orpheus group after intermission. (The Mozart concerto was on the first half of the program.) This is an early work, his Op. 4, his Piano Concerto No. 2, nicknamed “Silk Road.”

Say wrote the concerto in 1994, when he was in his mid-twenties. He was living in Berlin. And he was going to a museum—in particular, the ethnomusicology section of a museum. There, he listened to thousands and thousands of recordings. He was listening to folk music of Silk Road countries. And he put some of what he heard in his Piano Concerto No. 2. I might note that he nicknamed his concerto “Silk Road” before Yo-Yo Ma founded his project of the same name: a project that would become celebrated.

The concerto has four movements, or four sections. (There are no breaks in this piece.) They are called “White Dove, Black Clouds,” “Hindu Dances,” “Massacre,” and “Earth Ballad.” They relate to Tibet, India, Iraq, and Turkey. I should perhaps mention that Say himself is Turkish. I should also say that his piano, for this concerto, is a prepared piano: a piano with objects put on or between the strings, to produce different sounds.

John Cage popularized this technique. Fazil Say has used it to good and musical effect. His concerto is full of interesting sounds, coming from both the piano and the orchestra. And these are not sounds for sounds' sake. They are not exotica for exotica's sake. They serve a musical purpose.

Get ready for some made-up words—because I want to say that the concerto begins glissy, trilly, and chromatic. I thought of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G. There is a touch of minimalism along the way. And some brutality: refined brutality. At its silliest, the piece could be the soundtrack for a Kung Fu movie. I do not mean “silly” pejoratively. There is room for silliness in music, heaven knows (and as Mozart knew, and as Say proved, in that concerto). Say's work ends in simplicity and quietude. It also ends on time. It ends before it can be too long. Earl Wild said, “Music ought to say what it has to say, and get off the stage.” Evidently, Say agrees.

I look forward to hearing this work again, preferably played, as with Orpheus, by the composer himself, who is a superb advocate of his own and others' music.

The Metropolitan Opera staged an opera written in 2000, *L'Amour de loin*, or *Love from Afar*, by Kaija Saariaho, the Finnish composer. She has spent her career in Paris. The libretto is by Amin Maalouf, a native of Lebanon, who has also spent his career in Paris. Indeed, he is a member of the French Academy. He has collaborated with Saariaho several times.

In *L'Amour de loin*, Jaufré Rudel, Prince of Blaye (Aquitaine), is bored with the lovers he can see. He wants one he cannot see, one who is far away. (Incidentally, Rudel is a big name in opera, given the late conductor Julius.) A pilgrim tells him about Clémence, Countess of Tripoli. She's the one! Jaufré becomes obsessed with her. A troubadour as well as a prince, he sings of her night and day. The pilgrim acts as their go-between. Finally, Jaufré travels to meet Clémence—and dies on doing so.

I think of another opera, *Thaïs*, by Massenet: one of the lovers dies just as the romance should begin.

L'Amour de loin is set in the twelfth century. Will it be updated, as so many operas are? That would be a pity. The tale needs a sense of ancient timelessness,

if that is not a contradiction. So does *Tristan und Isolde*—which was, sadly, updated by the Met this year. (*Tristan* is another opera in which one of the lovers dies tragically soon.)

Saariaho's score is lulling and dream-like. The story has a dream—an actual dream—which might be seen and heard as a dream within a dream. The music is full of soft percussion, delivering bells, chimes, shivers, tinglies . . . There is often an orchestral wash. North Africa is suggested by a kind of Orientalism, but I heard the score as basically French. It is perhaps a descendant of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the Debussy opera. Once, the tenor Ben Heppner described *Pelléas* as “four hours of French Novocain.”

The dream-like state of *L'Amour de loin* is interrupted now and then with wails, groans, or other outbursts. At one point there is clapping. An homage to Steve Reich, master of clapping? The opera ends with Clémence singing over Jaufré's lifeless body, in an angry *Liebestod*.

One difficulty I had: caring about the lovers, or would-be lovers, who are terribly privileged and terribly self-absorbed, making problems for themselves where none ought to exist.

In any event, the Met supplied an able cast. Jaufré was Eric Owens, the American bass-baritone. For about half the opera, his sound was wobbly, but it evened out, and he always sang with dignity. An American soprano, Susanna Phillips, was Clémence, and she emitted a pleasant ribbon of sound. She also sang with understanding and commitment. The pilgrim—known simply as the Pilgrim—is a trouser role, and it was taken by Tamara Mumford, the American mezzo. She put on little less than a clinic of singing. In the pit was another Susanna, and the composer's fellow Finn: Susanna Mälkki, who did her part in maintaining the spell of the opera.

Truly beautiful—lovely, dream-like, enchanting—is the production. It was conceived by Robert Lepage, the Canadian director (a third Quebecker for our chronicle). Not merely beautiful on its own, the production matches the score, note by note. Both the music and the production are shimmering.

Frankly, a little *L'Amour de loin* goes a long way for me. I am ready for the dream to be over. But this opera is greatly loved by many people, and they have a point.

The media

Faking it and making it

by James Bowman

The post-election period has been rich in ironies, mostly at the expense of the media who remain blind to them through their inveterate self-righteousness. First and most spectacularly, perhaps, there was the outcry against Donald Trump's asseveration, before November 8, that the election was "rigged" against him. The suggestion that Mrs. Clinton's approaching victory—which at the time appeared to be a sure thing—would be illegitimate was universally denounced in the media as a crime against democracy. Then, after the shocking result, they turned on a dime and started claiming that Mr. Trump's victory had itself been illegitimate, for any number of reasons—either on account of "voter suppression" or of his supposed "\$2 billion worth of free media" or of the announcement by James Comey in the election's final ten days of an FBI investigation into the Clinton Foundation or, if nothing else, because (as has been true throughout America's constitutional history) the popular vote, won by Mrs. Clinton, was not the determinative factor in deciding who had actually won. In some quarters, Mr. Trump's election was taken as evidence that democracy itself was much overrated.

Then there was the irony of the violent reaction to defeat by mostly young supporters of Mrs. Clinton in cities across the country—many of them apparently under a similar misapprehension to that of a screaming seventeen-year-old girl in San Francisco seen holding up a sign in a *Washington Post* photo reading "Nazi President." Another youth

from the same collection of images, this one in New Haven, holds a sign reading "Trump = Fascist"—except that "Fascist" appears to have been misspelled as "Facist" and has an "s" squeezed in between the "a" and the "c" in a different color. The poor dears! Obviously, no one has ever explained to them that the fascists were the people who took to the streets to engage in vandalism and violence while denouncing and threatening and intimidating those who disagreed with them, not the people they were denouncing and threatening and intimidating—and, in at least some cases, beating up. In other words, if there was any fascism going forward, it was all theirs.

The irony, I suppose, was necessarily lost on those who were also denouncing, their faces contorted with hatred, the "hate" they attributed to Mr. Trump. The media gave a respectful and even a sympathetic hearing to the views of the protestors instead of denouncing them as they had done the pro-Trump rioters expected in the wake of a Clinton victory. "For many of the people who have turned out for the current protests, it has been a kind of group therapy," reported *The New York Times*, "and [they] already seem to be cementing new, cross-sectional liberal coalitions."

Meanwhile, the editorialists and columnists preferred to concentrate on various isolated and anonymous incidents of reported or graffitied racial slurs or anti-immigrant sentiments, as if these must be the responsibility of the winning candidate. "Denounce the Hate, Mr. Trump," demanded the editorial board of *The*

New York Times, who obviously weren't thinking of their own hate any more than the children who were carrying "Love Trumps Hate" signs. No, no. It was always axiomatic that Mr. Trump was the hater. "Hateful acts are on the rise," echoed *The Washington Post*, "and it's Trump's responsibility to take a stand." It clearly never occurred to anyone at the *Post*, either, that the hate-filled demonstrators could have committed any "hateful acts."

Most ironic of all from the point of view of the media—or rather from the point of view that the media seem incapable of adopting, even though it would be infinitely to their benefit in terms of both truth and readability for them to do so—was the outcry against "fake news," said to be fostered and encouraged by their upstart rivals in "social media," possibly with the assistance of Russian or Macedonian hackers (experts said) plying gullible Trump supporters with disinformation (or accurate but purloined information) tending to the disadvantage of Mrs. Clinton. Worst of all, these dark, clandestine forces were causing a drop in readership and in newspaper advertising revenue and so endangering the livelihood of proper journalists, like the criers-out.

"The internet-borne forces that are eating away at print advertising are enabling a host of *faux*-journalistic players to pollute the democracy with dangerously fake news items," thundered Jim Rutenberg of *The New York Times* on the day before the election. Mr. Rutenberg, you may remember, was the man so confident of his own and his fellow journalists' intimacy with the truth that last summer he called on his media colleagues to join the Democrats in denouncing Mr. Trump's "lies" (see "After the fact" in *The New Criterion* of October, 2016)—as if they were not already doing so. His descent into advocacy journalism was to him no descent at all when political right and wrong, good and evil, were as clear-cut and indisputable as they were to him—and to his many journalistic colleagues whose careers he now saw as being endangered by the numbers of their former readers flocking to alternative news sources. And yet, somehow, he was able to make no connection between that dwindling readership and the media partisanship

which he had made newly explicit but which had already brought people's trust in the media, as measured by pollsters, to historically low levels.

"Fake news," he might have reflected, was in the eye of the beholder, and a lot of people saw the news that the un-*faux*, unsocial media have been promoting for the past year and a half (and much longer, if the truth be told) as being quite as fake as that of any troll on Facebook. Thus the pretense of the media "fact-checkers" that facts are readily identifiable among the welter of lies and half-truths is increasingly transparent to readers who already have good reason for supposing that the media's interest in "truth" is far from disinterested. And, sure enough, fake news appeared always and everywhere to be a partisan phenomenon. None of the many stories and columns about it that I read included any examples from supporters of Mrs. Clinton, which suggests that the whole idea—in the form of "post-truth," which was named the Oxford Dictionaries' international word of the year for 2016—was no more than an attempt to claim some sort of scholarly or quasi-scientific authority for the insinuation of lying against Mr. Trump that the media had been making in cruder and more direct forms for months.

Margaret Sullivan, the media columnist of *The Washington Post*, quoted Scottie Nell Hughes, a Trump supporter, as saying on *The Diane Rehm Show* that "there's no such thing, unfortunately, anymore, of [*sic*] facts" and treats this as a self-evident falsehood—which, paradoxically, only confirms Ms. Hughes's point by noting that what is a fact to Ms. Hughes is no fact to Ms. Sullivan and vice versa. This, then, leads the latter into a version of the Trump apocalypticism that was so much a feature of the post-election period.

It's time to dust off your old copy of George Orwell's "1984" and recall this passage: "The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation. These contradictions are not accidental,

nor do they result from ordinary hypocrisy: they are deliberate exercises in doublethink.”

In other words, Trumpism is the second coming of the Stalinism that Orwell was satirizing. And that, presumably, is a fact. To her.

What could be faker than that? And was it not also a form of “fake news” for the *Washington Post* to allow Terrence McCoy to report on the likes of a couple of obscure “clickbait” artists named Paris Wade and Ben Goldman, said to be making lots of money out of fabricating stories to appeal to Internet-browsing Trump supporters, as if they were representative of the unofficial pro-Trump media, amateur and professional, which has arisen as an alternative to the partisan media of the other side? If “fake news” is a problem, it must be a problem to both sides or else the fake news story is itself a species of fake news—particularly if by that is meant no more than dubious information promulgated solely for partisan advantage. Thus when Dana Milbank wrote of “Trump’s fake-news presidency” or Ruth Marcus of “The post-truth presidency” within days of the election and well before that presidency had even begun, anyone more charitably disposed to Mr. Trump than *The Washington Post* could be excused for seeing fakery at work there as well.

A note of skepticism about the whole idea was sounded by John Herrman of *The New York Times* who saw “Fake News” as being, for the Left, “the discovery of the error that explains everything.” He thinks this “misunderstands a new media world in which every story, and source, is at risk of being discredited, not by argument but by sheer force.”

“Fake news” as shorthand will almost surely be returned upon the media tenfold. The fake news narrative, as widely understood and deployed, has already begun to encompass not just falsified, fabricated stories, but a wider swath of traditional media on Facebook and elsewhere. Fox News? Fake news. Mr. Trump’s misleading claims about Ford keeping jobs in America? Fake news. The entirety of hyperpartisan Facebook? Fake news. This wide formulation of “fake news” will be applied back to the traditional news media, which

does not yet understand how threatened its ability is to declare things true, even when they are.

“Threatened”? Surely, if the election showed anything it was that the traditional media’s ability to declare things true (or false) was, in fact, already long gone. Facebook, therefore, which Mr. Herrman describes as “the company that created the system that resulted in hoax news stories,” is a symptom, not a cause. “Those,” he says, “who expect the operator of the dominant media ecosystem of our time, in response to getting caught promoting lies, to suddenly return authority to the companies it has superseded are in for a similar surprise.” But Facebook couldn’t “return authority” to the traditional media if it wanted to, since that authority was lost by the media’s naked partisanship over the course of the last three elections—and by the very imperfectly clothed kind that preceded it.

As Brendan O’Neill of the British left-libertarian site *Spiked Online* wrote:

This is the great irony of the fake-news panic that has swept the Western media in recent days It’s the fakest news story of the week. It might not be as utterly invented as the one about Hillary’s people abusing children in a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C. But it involves a profounder avoidance of truth, a deeper unwillingness to face up to facts. In particular the fact that the rise of fake news, “alternative news,” and conspiracy theories speaks not to the wicked interventions of myth-spreaders from without, but to the corrosion of reason within, right here in the West. It speaks to the declining moral and cultural authority of our own political and media class. It is the Western world’s own abandonment of objectivity, and loss of legitimacy in the eyes of its populace, that has nurtured something of a free-for-all on the facts and news front.

I myself would be wary about using the word “objectivity” to describe the journalistic ideal, since objectivity in any absolute sense is impossible. We have to see things from our own point of view. But democracy depends on the assumption that we can share a point of view as a people, of one country, no matter

what our differences. Or, to put it another way, it's the necessary assumption that those opposed to us politically are people of good will and basic honesty and decency who want the same things that we want—namely, the good of all Americans. That this assumption is also long gone was made clear with Hillary Clinton's deploring of that "basket of deplorables" which she saw among the supporters of her opponent during the campaign. Though she subsequently apologized, does anyone doubt that this is how she really sees the world? The assumption mentioned above of good will on the part of those who oppose us which is necessary to democracy is no longer made by either side in our political wars—which are, indeed, more like war than politics in a democracy.

What both the fake news, such as it is, and the outcry against it mask is a breakdown in the trust that our political culture—and any democratic polity—depends on. And that breakdown comes from the moralization of politics by the Left with the assistance of the media. Their practice of identity politics is ultimately based on a Marxist-Leninist inspired division of the country into the exploited and the exploiters which allows for no common ground between them and depends on the assumption that what is good for one must be bad for the other. This tendency is exacerbated by the media's obsession with scandal, which has contributed mightily to the moralization of politics and, therefore, to the anti-democratic

assumption that political divisions are between good and evil—evil in contemporary terms being racism, sexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia (even though Islam is itself homophobic), and, increasingly, capitalism.

In short, our politics are tending to the revolutionary—or counter-revolutionary if you prefer, since it comes to the same thing—and youthful idealists taking to the streets to shout about "fascism," even if they have no idea what it means, seem to portend (at the risk of engaging in their own sort of hyperbole) a looming civil war just off the reality-TV stage. It may be only a postmodern sort of war, fought not for honor or territory but for TV time, and with very limited casualties, but the uncompromising hostility on both sides leaves little rhetorical room for anything else. It also has in common with real war a need to portray the other side as evil in order to justify the effort to eliminate it. We might remember that "fake news," under the name of propaganda, has always been a feature of war time. The historian Robert G. Parkinson cited the example of our own revered founder Ben Franklin, who fabricated atrocity stories against the British and their Indian allies during or just after the Revolutionary War. It might be a good idea for the non-revolutionary media—if there is such a thing anymore—to remember that the next time they are tempted to hype the opposition by trotting out their comparisons to Hitler or Stalin—or the devil who, as St. John's gospel reminds us, is the father of fake news.

Books

The price of peace

by Daisy Dunn

Today one struggles to find much sympathy for Edward Gibbon's view that, at its height, "the vast extent of Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom." Contempt for empire, and for the British Empire in particular, is palpable. The student-led campaign to remove a statue of Cecil Rhodes from a building at the University of Oxford last year was no anomaly. Even among those who accept that there is little to be gained from obliterating such monuments, unease often still lingers over the roots of Western power and prosperity. That unease has found its place in the academy, and some say that it has done so to its detriment. While few would advocate a return to the gung-ho attitudes of some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians, there is certainly a risk that, by going too far in the other direction, we develop a myopic understanding of the empires of the past.

The Romans are now often scorned as blood-crazed empire builders, who imposed their iron will upon blameless foreign peoples. Adrian Goldsworthy, the historian of ancient civilizations, rejects that characterization as simplistic and broadly inaccurate.¹ He should not be considered contrarian for taking Roman peace, *Pax Romana*, as the subject of his monumental and highly engaging new book. "*Pax*," as he explains, is derived from the same

root as "*pacare*," the verb the Romans used to describe the act of "pacifying" or subduing non-Romans through war. Roman peace, in other words, followed Roman conquest. The terrible human cost of Roman expansion is one that Goldsworthy readily acknowledges, but his book comes at a febrile time. We may well have reached the point at which no historian who highlights the achievements of empire is immune from accusations of being an apologist.

Rome did not become the empire that it was at its height without considerable aggression and bloodshed. Few of the soldiers who fought its wars could have doubted that they were acting honorably. "*Virtus*" was a martial quality: the valor and courage that ran in the blood of every true and decent Roman "*vir*," or man. The historian Polybius, whom Goldsworthy quotes, attributed the Senate's willingness to dispatch an army against Dalmatia in the mid-second century B.C. to their fear that the Italians might "become effeminate owing to the long peace." To demonstrate *virtus* to oneself and to others in war was no less significant than the quest for security and wealth.

Roman soldiers thrived on "warring down the proud"—to the point that, by the early second century B.C., it was ruled that for a Roman victory to be considered worthy of a triumph, the enemy dead needed to exceed 5,000. Goldsworthy calculates that between 200 and 91 B.C., a period during which the Romans celebrated a staggering eighty-five triumphs, 425,000 non-Romans must have

1 *Pax Romana: War, Peace and Conquest in the Roman World*, by Adrian Goldsworthy; Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 528 pages, \$32.50.

lost their lives. Given that a million more are thought to have died in the course of Julius Caesar's campaigns in Gaul, Goldsworthy probably isn't wide of the mark when he conjectures that "more human beings were killed by Roman gladius swords than any other weapon before the modern era" (though he adds that "the ubiquitous AK-47 has no doubt surpassed this grim record in the last half-century or so").

Compare the empire of Rome to that of Alexander the Great, and you'll find that it was larger and more enduring, but hardly more violent. Alexander's assault on Persia set the tone for many later conflicts. It is against the background of these and the earlier campaigns of the Greeks and Persians that Goldsworthy believes Roman expansion should be understood. The difference, perhaps, is that the Romans learned to take as much pride in the peace that resulted from conquest as from the conquest itself. Non-Romans (as well as modern readers) may have eyed this so-called peace with suspicion; Goldsworthy quotes Tacitus's account of a Caledonian war leader who claimed that the Romans "create a desolation and call it peace." But the Romans certainly thought that the kind of peace they were capable of bestowing was to be lauded.

In the *Res Gestae*, his glorified résumé, Emperor Augustus boasted of ordering the doors of the temple of two-faced Janus to be closed three times, an act permitted only in peacetime. His great marble altar, the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace), bore happy, rustic scenes of fertility and grand processions of the imperial family. In reality, Goldsworthy notes, the doors of Janus were shut just twice, and for barely a year at a time. The doors were prevented from being closed on the third occasion by the outbreak of war elsewhere in the empire. There was very little let-up in military campaigns under Augustus' rule. Augustus was the great expander—had he not been, he could hardly have "found Rome made from brick and left it paved in marble."

That is not to say that peace was not the Romans' ultimate aim. Cicero once said that the Senate's designation of provinces "should aim at maintaining lasting peace," and one gets

the impression that many shared his view. It wasn't exactly in a Roman general's interest to further antagonize the erstwhile rulers of freshly acquired territory. Few Romans had the patience to deal with bickering foreign chieftains, so they often permitted provinces to retain their old laws in the interest of stability. Goldsworthy is particularly good at explaining how the growing empire functioned administratively on a day-to-day basis.

We are on slightly riskier ground when we try to define certain Roman campaigns as defensive rather than offensive. While some Romans must certainly have felt that the bitter infighting and migration of Gallic tribes in the first century B.C. posed a threat to the stability of their surrounding territory, there is no doubt that Caesar was itching for a war, which the activity of the Gallic tribes duly gave him. Equally, Goldsworthy is right in suggesting that the Romans might genuinely have feared Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus (a kingdom in Asia Minor, on the southern coast of the Black Sea). It ought, however, to be stressed that Rome's establishment of the province of Asia on Mithridates' doorstep, and its rapacious tax-farming in that region, are important background to the conflict. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Romans often brought a lot more strife upon themselves than was necessary.

After the defeat of Carthage, for instance, piracy became a major headache for the Romans. Places such as Delos, which had helped to keep banditry at bay, were so weakened as a result of Roman activity that pirates gained the upper hand. A young Julius Caesar was among those captured near Rhodes. It would be some years before Pompey the Great was granted an extraordinary command to see the pirates off once and for all. In light of the Romans' short-sightedness regarding the effects of subduing the places that had once restrained piracy, it is perhaps no surprise that Goldsworthy identifies the greatest threat to Roman peace and prosperity as having come from themselves during the same period. The civil wars of 88–30 B.C., he says, were the most destructive to security in Roman history.

While his prose is clear and measured, Goldsworthy's argument is pleasingly impassioned. It is not right, he argues forcefully, to view all Romans as innately expansionist, when Roman expansion was largely resigned to the Republic and rule of Augustus. Later emperors engaged in war, of course, but after Augustus died in A.D. 14, there was less appetite for conflict. Why this change took place, Goldsworthy must concede, remains unclear. It is true that Augustus advised his heir Tiberius against further expansion. The reason Augustus issued that advice at all, however, is unknowable. Was it merely because he knew that further expansion would overstretch Rome's resources, and that the empire had reached its natural limits, or was he more afraid of Tiberius overtaking his record? Did he mean that the Romans ought to keep the empire within its present limits for the time being, or forever? Goldsworthy is convinced that Augustus' advice against further expansion could only have had a short-term effect. In the longer term, the later emperors' relatively restrained foreign policy might reflect their unwillingness to leave the city for too long, and perhaps also their heightened regard for the peace that had already been achieved. A lack of war could be taken as a sign that Rome was so powerful that no one dared confront her.

What, then, did Pax Romana achieve? In the long term, many territories were more peaceful than they had been before they were ruled from Rome. Revolts, Goldsworthy shows, were relatively rare, and when they did occur they tended to erupt in the immediate aftermath of takeover. Indeed, the Pax Romana helped to put an end to a number of intertribal conflicts. There was no more head hunting in Britain, for example, after the demise of Boudicca. Goldsworthy is surely right to suggest that one reason for the lack of rebellion was that the Romans strove hard to make conditions acceptable to those they imposed them upon. Though the Romans themselves liked to believe that peace reigned because everyone knew that they were unbeatable, Goldsworthy perhaps places a little too much emphasis on this as a further explanation for the lack of revolt. Are revolutionaries really so eas-

ily deterred? Was it not worth making one's voice heard, despite knowing that little could change?

More convincing to the modern mind is his explanation that fear played a role in the success of Roman peace. People who had seen how the Romans forged that peace had every reason to fear the repercussions should they have broken it. One's gut reaction is that Goldsworthy has played down the fear factor in his account. By the time one reaches the end of his book, however, one realizes how far modern distaste for imperialism has colored our view of the Roman Empire. Certainly there were cases in which fear played a part in people's acceptance of Roman rule, but Goldsworthy's achievement is to show that the alternative to Roman peace was often either unappealing or long forgotten. He has set Pax Romana in its proper context, which isn't today's politically correct world, but the Romans' own world. Britain as the Romans found it would not have been a place we would have wanted to inhabit. The question that lingers is one provoked by our own times: Peace, but at what cost?

The italics of life

Craig Raine

My Grandmother's Glass Eye.

Atlantic Books, 224 pages, \$16.99

reviewed by Steven McGregor

“Words mean things, sir,” one of my old First Sergeants liked to say. This was his plea for carefully considered speech; he believed that words had great power and that a man was responsible for what he said. Craig Raine, in his new book on poetry, *My Grandmother's Glass Eye*, makes the same case. “The first task we require of poetry,” he writes, “is to *mean* something” (his italics).

Here one is reminded of Matthew Arnold's dictum that poetry should be concerned with “high seriousness” (we know Raine is a fan—a quotation of Arnold's appears on the last page of every issue of Raine's magazine, *Arété*). One also thinks of Saint Paul's observation that “when I

was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” Maturity brings with it a new language, a language of seriousness and complexity. Is this the meaning Raine is after?

Certainly he expects great things from poetry. Raine says that it “puts the world in italics,” it “teaches the language to sing.” When constructed properly, verse sustains tremendous weight. Like a Roman victory column, a poem is there before the reader, intricate, enticing, monumental. It commands attention and rewards close inspection. Ted Hughes’s “New Year Exhilaration” is one such poem for Raine. Hughes describes the newness of an early January day through weather and landscape, “The river/ Thunders like a factory . . . the whole landscape/ Is imperilled, like a tarpaulin/ With the wind under it.” For Raine, the “counter-intuitive comparison of the river to a factory,” the mixture of the comedic and apocalyptic, all serve to create a “surge,” an “exhilaration.” The poem conjures real life.

“New Year Exhilaration” is also comprehensible. “We have no difficulty reading this poem,” Raine says, because its meaning is immediately grasped. This is not to say that something more “difficult” (Raine and T. S. Eliot’s word) is unwelcome. Indeed, much of *Glass Eye* is Raine leading us by the hand along tortured streets. Keats’s “Grecian Urn” is actually about a rape, for example, and Walt Whitman’s “The Torch” is not so much a light for fishing as “an emblem of consciousness.” Navigating this difficult terrain, Raine praises direct language, accuracy of description, and emotion. Such things are signposts toward meaning, allowing poems to function as pathways for shared contemplation, even a kind of shared experience.

This aspect of poetry explains the book’s title, which is taken from Elizabeth Bishop and discussed in the final section of the book. Bishop’s grandmother wore a prosthetic eye, a condition that reminded her of “the situation of the poet: the difficulty of combining the real with the decidedly unnatural; the curious effect that a poem produces of being as normal as *sight* and

yet as synthetic, as artificial, as a *glass eye*” (her italics). Raine’s hunt for meaning is understood then as a hunt for a convincing fraud, a manufactured eye that, through its craftsmanship, appears just like the one beside it. And, for Raine, the way in which poetry approximates reality is through its most characteristic devices: rhythm, line breaks, lyricism, metaphor, and sub-text. More than cosmetic, these devices are part of the substance of a poem, and are the ways in which meaning is rendered.

In this we see the value of Raine’s contribution. Wordsworth, in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, claimed that poetry is inspired by “emotion recollected in tranquility.” It was a way of coming to terms with the past, of subduing it. And, amidst the political upheavals of the Napoleonic Era, this was a much-needed literary power. Larkin developed this idea by describing poetry as a “verbal device,” a device that will “reproduce” a desired “emotional concept in anyone who cares to read it.” The poem was his sheet anchor, a way of holding fast to experience amidst the postmodern tide. Wordsworth sought to come to terms with the past—Larkin to incarnate it with language, to prevent its dissipation. In both cases memory was essential. The poet was experiencing and remembering. And in so doing he was building and protecting. Raine does more than reposit this wall because, while emotion and personal experience are important to him, his focus on meaning, oddly, allows for further abstraction.

“A Martian Sends a Postcard Home,” a poem of Raine’s published in 1979, which is discussed in *Glass Eye* and reprinted in the appendix, is the best example of this development. In seventeen couplets, a Martian gives his impression of books, automobiles, weather, telephones and bathrooms: “Rain is when the earth is television./ It has the property of making colours darker.” There is emotion and lived experience. But because of the Martian’s perspective, as well as the tradecraft—the metaphor, the line breaks, the lyricism—the mundane takes on a weirdness. The world appears in italics. Consider too that *Glass Eye* is dedicated to Milan Kundera, who writes in *The Art of the Novel* that, “the poet is a young man whose mother leads him to display himself to a world he cannot enter.”

That is, the poet is a Martian yet he writes in a language that Earthlings understand.

So far critics have missed the importance of Raine's defense of meaning, instead being distracted by tone. "Raine also likes to be rude," William Wootten scolds in the *Times Literary Supplement*. He essentially finds Raine to be presenting a "no-nonsense clarification" of difficult texts as well as a particular kind of taste. Or Julian Stannard, who begins his review in the *Spectator* by stating that "Craig Raine is a pugnacious figure," before going on to add that reading *Glass Eye* "is rather like having a ring-side seat where the punches are only going in one direction." Neither reviewer addresses the substance of Raine's argument, which, similar to those put forward by Wordsworth and Larkin, is a much-needed assessment of the state of contemporary poetry—that authorial intention is often ignored, that poetic devices are no longer treasured or studied, that criticism is rarely more than an excuse for political sloganeering, that words have, at least for some, lost their meaning.

Working over time

James Gleick

Time Travel: A History.

Pantheon Books, 336 pages, \$26.95

reviewed by David Guaspari

James Gleick's *Time Travel* riffs on the topics that might pop up in a serious bull session about time: eternity; memory; the theory of relativity; causation; personal identity (what makes me the same person today as yesterday); free will versus determinism; the subjective time of poets, novelists, and (some) philosophers versus the operational time of physicists (and other philosophers); time as a cycle, as an arrow, as an eternal recurrence; time travel and its paradoxes. It is in part a treasury of quotations. The opening chapters alone cite (among others) St. Augustine, Newton, Richard Feynman, Hobbes, Schopenhauer, Susan Sontag, Saint Paul, Tennyson, Poe, Borges, and one of my favorite comedians, Stephen Wright: "Right

now I'm having amnesia and déjà vu at the same time. I think I've forgotten this before."

The hook is the publication, in 1895, of H. G. Wells's novel *The Time Machine*, the first story about *traveling* in time. Fiction had previously shown heroes, like Rip Van Winkle and Hank Morgan (the Connecticut Yankee), who one day found themselves in a different era. But they hadn't gone adventuring. Gleick asks: Why *then*? What changed?

He's full of suggestive anecdotes. There is no record, he says, of anyone celebrating the centennial of anything until Americans celebrated the centennial of the Declaration of Independence in 1876. The phrase "turn of the century" didn't exist before the twentieth. The idea of sending messages to the future, to inform them about ourselves, seems to have originated in 1938 with the time capsule, a "tragicomic time machine." The future itself was a modern invention, when it became thinkable that, for better or worse, what was to come might differ radically from what is or has been. In the words of Paul Valéry (which Gleick, to my surprise, doesn't quote), "The problem of our times is that the future is not what it used to be." Wells himself was a thoroughly and self-consciously modern man who believed in Progress and in the importance of creative people determined to bring the future about.

Gleick concerns himself not just with highfalutin thoughts but with what they turn into after trickling down into general culture. Victorian England, for example, had a fling with "the fourth dimension," which could serve as a hiding place for any mysterious possibility one wanted to believe in, including telepathy and clairvoyance. Wells's Time Traveller (not otherwise named) finds it a good-enough-for-sci-fi explanation of time travel: in addition to having dimensions of height, width, and depth, objects cannot exist unless they persist in a fourth dimension of *duration*; one can maneuver not only in the three spatial dimensions but in that one as well.

I doubt Wells knew it, but mathematicians had long since demystified the idea of dealing with any number of dimensions. Geometrical terms like "space" and "dimension" were retained as useful analogies, but their applica-

tion was no longer restricted to idealizations of the physical space of everyday experience; rather, the number of dimensions associated with a model of any physical system is simply the number of things needed to describe it. A model that characterizes a boiler by pressure, temperature, the setting of a throttle, and the length of time it's been running has four dimensions. The state of the boiler corresponds to a list of those four values, and that list is called a "point" in the model's four-dimensional "space." There is no good way to associate each of those four-number lists with a point in our three-dimensional physical space, but so what? (To say that is not to disparage the intellectual reorientation required.) Gleick says that spaces with more than three dimensions are abstractions that lack a physical meaning, but what they lack is a representation in physical space.

Gleick's typical chapter is more like an improvised tune than a parsable argument, and even ends with what a jazz musician would call a tag: "We are all futurists now"; "This is the way the world ends"; "Only the Time Traveller can call himself free." Here, for example, is a sample from the flow of a chapter titled "Philosophers and Pulps": Laudatory reviews of *The Time Machine*, leading to an outlier criticizing the story's logic, leading to a paper in a philosophical journal about the logic of time travel . . . eventually passing through a Felix the Cat short subject (Father Time sends him into the past by turning the hands of his clock backward) . . . winding up with Hugo Gernsback, "selfmade inventor . . . entrepreneur . . . and . . . bullshit artist" and prophet of a marvel-filled future (which would include "electrically propelled roller skates"), who founded *Amazing Stories*, the first magazine devoted to what he called scientific fiction. Then a quick coda, a sci-fi plot: a time traveler becoming his own father. "Page Einstein indeed."

This sophisticated noodling retails amazing amounts of information about novels, stories, movies, popular culture, and—at a well-informed layman's level—science and philosophy. It can be highly entertaining. The stories often have witty plots, and Gleick dis-

penses many diverting asides from his magpie hoard. Who knew that the first Borges story to appear in English was published in, of all places, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*? Or that Ursula K. Le Guin went to high school with Philip K. Dick? (Though, *contra* his suggestion, the fact that *The Time Machine* appeared shortly before Einstein's first papers on relativity *is* pure coincidence. A hook is just a hook; not everything's a fish.)

Now for two complaints.

Gleick's breezy tone usually serves him well but sometimes conveys not knowledge but a pose of knowingness. For example, he cites a famous fragment from Newton's *Principia*:

Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in and of itself and of its own nature, without reference to anything external, flows uniformly . . .

This, he says, is "handed down to us as if engraved on tablets of stone"—which is, to begin with, a cliché beneath such a good writer. More important, the implication of dogmatism is misleading. The words quoted occur at the beginning of a discussion in which Newton lays out his underlying ideas about time, space, and motion, and then *presents arguments* for them (though the most elaborate and detailed concern not time but motion). The patronizing rhetoric continues: For Newton, "Absolute time is God's time. He had no evidence for it." Scholars disagree about what Newton commits himself to, but insofar as he goes beyond setting out the axioms of a model—which would be justified by its spectacular success—he's engaged in a metaphysical dispute, whose weapons are not data but arguments. ("God's time" alludes to the so-called General Scholium, which Newton added to the second edition of *Principia* in response to his critics.) Sniffs of condescension are elsewhere directed at Aristotle and the great mathematician Laplace.

Complaint number two: Gleick's account of "space-time," one of the central scientific ideas in the book, grabs the wrong end of the stick. The concept, though not the term, comes from Hermann Minkowski. With it he reformulated the theory of special relativity, proclaiming that "Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself,

are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.” Gleick’s exposition seizes on a technical aspect of Minkowski’s model that does not differentiate it from Newtonian physics: namely, representing a body moving through space not as a succession of snapshots (here, then there, then there . . .) but from a god’s eye view, as a history laid out all at once. The maneuver is familiar. A newspaper lays out the history of a stock as a graph showing its price through time. A stock moves in one dimension (price up or down), so its graph is a track through the two dimensions of the page—using one dimension for price and one for date. We can similarly think of the entire history of a body moving in physical space as a track (which Minkowski calls its worldline) through a four-dimensional space aptly called space-time. Each point in a model of space-time is a list of four numbers that represents an *event*—three specifying where the event happens and the fourth specifying when. (Every observer makes his own model of the public universe of events, using his own clocks and yardsticks; whether all observers can agree on the clock and yardstick is the deep question that divides Einstein from Newton.)

Minkowski models the history of the cosmos as a collection of world-lines, analogous to a single newspaper image on which the tracks of all the stocks in the market have been printed. This aspect of the model is important to Gleick because it presents a world in which the distinctions between present, past, and future can be regarded as an illusion. All moments of history are simultaneously present in the set of worldlines; “now” is just a way of selecting a point from each of them.

But Newton’s universe can also be modeled as a collection of world-lines, so the crucial difference lies elsewhere. Imagine two events: button pushed; missile lands. Different observers can use their yardsticks to measure the spatial separation of those events (the distance between the button and the target) and their clocks to measure temporal separation (the time between push and boom). In Newton’s world, measurements of time and distance are independent of one another and all observers

agree on the results. Neither is true in the Einstein/Minkowski world. There is, however, a more fundamental measure of separation, not between the spatial aspects or the temporal aspects of events but between events themselves. Called the space-time interval, its measurement requires both yardsticks and clocks, which cannot be disentangled. All observers—strictly speaking, all *inertial* observers—do agree when they measure intervals. Space-time is characterized by this special geometry.

To describe the state of time in the early twentieth century, Gleick contrasts the views of Einstein and the philosopher Henri Bergson, whom a journalist visiting from the twenty-first century would no doubt call a major public intellectual and a rock star. (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy suggests that one of his lectures was responsible for the first-ever traffic jam on Broadway.) For Bergson, time doesn’t exist independently of us and our perceptions of it, and cannot be understood exclusively through science. Time can be grasped only by an act of intuition. For Einstein, time is what a clock says—a theoretical clock defined in a sophisticated and physically fundamental way. One may legitimately speak of a subjective, psychological experience of time but, as Einstein said in a famous public debate with Bergson, “The time of the philosophers does not exist.”

Gleick wraps up his set with choruses that reassert the importance of our experience. He cites the great modernist writers, whose work is saturated with Bergsonian ideas. (Proust and Faulkner read Bergson, and Eliot attended his lectures.) Ultimately, Gleick says, we “need” time travel (odd word) “to elude death.” The ersatz immortality offered by our hyper-connected world, a kind of permanent present, is shallow. And the chilly view that time is somehow illusory, that the world lines have been laid down, hardly speaks to the fact that the drumbeat of life is loss. I know that the future will differ from the present in a very important way: it will not contain me. And the past was enriched by people that I loved (and still do). “Our entry into the past and the future,” Gleick says, “fitful and fleeting though it may be, makes us human.”

The Italian job

by David Pryce-Jones

If Europe were a living being, he or she would by now be in the Accident and Emergency ward of a hospital. The source of the trouble is easy to diagnose: it is the European Union. One grave symptom is the common currency, the euro, which operates to enrich some and impoverish others, blindly and cruelly. Even graver, perhaps, over the last decade migrants numbering in the millions have been abandoning Muslim homelands to reach Europe in an impulsive and contentious shift of population. Week after week, day after day, thousands more are still risking all to cross the Mediterranean. Ordinary processes of admission and vetting and integration are overwhelmed. The bureaucrats in the European Union capital of Brussels are unable to formulate any coherent foreign policy that might help to stop this massive flight from Muslim homelands, and they are equally helpless when it comes to devising measures that might reconcile the very divergent and sometimes conflicting cultures of natives and newcomers. What passes as demographic diversity realistically brings into question the future of European society and identity. Nationalism is heating everywhere to a temperature already close to explosion. In the absence of any known cure, this patient must either recover miraculously or die. The watchers at the bedside do not know what is to be hoped for, or what is to be feared.

Would-be doctors are coming off badly. One of the foremost among them is President Obama, who flew in to advise the British that in a referendum then about to occur

they should vote to stay within the European Union. The vote to leave, Brexit for short, almost immediately exposed him as an airhead without influence or the prestige due to his office. David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, campaigned one-sidedly on behalf of the European Union. The Brexit vote established that he was out of touch with public opinion, and so within a matter of hours he resigned to save face as best he could. Negotiation of terms for a different relationship between Britain and the countries on the continent commits the succeeding Prime Minister, Theresa May, to return to the virtue of government by consent.

The Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi organized for himself a spectacular re-run of the Cameron downfall. Previously Mayor of Florence, he was not even a member of parliament when the center-left Democratic Party thrust him into office in February 2014 at the age of thirty-nine. The career of Benito Mussolini had left Italy on the losing side, and the country's sixty-three post-war prime ministers have been convinced that membership in the European Union is the way to avoid repeating that historic mistake. Renzi presented himself as an ex-officio captain on the side bound to win. For the purpose, he would introduce reforms that strengthened the prime minister by centralizing powers hitherto vested in the regions, and weakening parliament in order to facilitate the legislative process he had in mind.

Accordingly, he set in motion a referendum to ask Italians for a Yes or a No to the following battery of questions—the internal

quotation is really not a simplifier: “Do you approve the text of the Constitutional Law concerning ‘dispositions for the overcoming of equal bicameralism, the reduction of the number of parliamentarians, the containing of the running costs of the institutions, the suppression of the National Economic and Labour Council and the review of Title V of Part II of the Constitution’ approved by Parliament and published in *Gazzetta ufficiale* n. 88 on 15 April 2016?” With misplaced confidence, Renzi gambled his future by promising to resign in the event of a No victory.

Since the middle of the last century my family has owned a house in Florence. In this retreat I cannot say that I have penetrated deep into the mystifying ways in which Italians do their business. Some scandalous issue churns violently for a moment, only to settle down as though nothing had actually happened. Malefactors on trial do receive sentences, but prison doors seem never to close on them. From top to bottom, in parliament and outside it, anomalies and checks and balances and personal relationships engage one and all in *combinazioni*, a key word inadequately translated as “deal-making,” the national art form of which there are so many supreme masters.

My neighbor in Tuscany, the late Muriel Spark, used to detect immense institutionalized wrongdoing, and she would weave conspiracy theories as fine-spun and brilliant as her novels. (How she would have delighted in the referendum!)

Anecdotal evidence is uncertain, to be sure, especially as out of politeness Italians tend to say what they think you want to hear. The chiropodist who trained in England, the electricians, and the men who come to look after the garden, make a point of congratulating me on Brexit as though it has been all my doing; they hope with apparent sincerity that Italy will follow suit. In my experience, people react to a mention of the European Union or the euro as they might to bad weather, grumbling that there’s nothing to be done about things of that kind. In today’s economic climate, a friend in the fashion industry has shut down her business. The old boys who sold beautiful

linens and cottons in the city center have also closed down. Signor Leoncini, well known in the trade, used to have a workshop making leather goods for Hermès in Paris. Regulations from Brussels are too costly or too onerous to be absorbed, so he dismissed his staff, sold the premises, and retired. Unemployment is running at almost 12 percent, and for the young higher still at 38 percent. Many a life will have been ruined from the outset.

I first heard of Renzi from a friend who is a lawyer, and who had once coined a memorable rule of thumb: “In Italy the law is indicative but not obligatory.” He did not think well of his Prime Minister. Renzi, he said, had exploited his status as Mayor not in the city’s interest but to advance himself. In a word, he was a vulgarian. If Renzi had thought that the jargonized language of the referendum questions would be evidence of his superior capacities, he was in error. Voters interpreted his modernizing reforms as a grab for power on the part of someone with dictatorial aspirations that once again might well land the country on the losing side. As if unaware of possible unpopularity, he made an issue of his commitment to the European Union. His every word was taken as elitist arrogance. Sounding more and more authoritarian as he campaigned, Renzi was heedlessly inviting a vote of no confidence.

Renzi lost the referendum by nineteen percentage points, suffering what he admitted was “an exceptionally clear defeat.” The Yes vote had a majority only in Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. In Sicily he won barely a quarter of the vote. Something on the order of three quarters of the voters under thirty-five rejected him. Conceding defeat on television with the look of humiliation straining his face, he had no choice except to keep his promise and resign. A general election is due to take place early next year; all bets on the outcome are off.

Nemesis took the improbable form of Giuseppe Piero Grillo, familiarly Beppe, the successful engineer of No. Born in Genoa in 1948, he began as a stand-up comedian and television personality with a talent for clowning, satire, and four-letter repartee. Millions are said to read his blog. Masses of curly white hair and a beard to match give him the air of a

typical aging hippie. His career took a political turn in 2010, when he launched the Five Star Movement. Found guilty of involuntary manslaughter in a car accident in 1980, he himself is barred by law from holding public office. Five Star currently has 91 of the 630 seats in parliament but no obvious candidate to head either government or opposition. Their platform amounts to a protest against all forms of political correctness. In particular, they would nationalize banks, re-instate the lira in place of the euro, and in the wake of Britain leave the European Union.

“Europe in turmoil,” ran the headline in more than one newspaper in more than one language. “I would like to see Yes win,” Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, had said in a timely interview he gave in Italy, adding that the country’s budget for next year “complied with E.U. rules,” precisely what so many Italians did not want to hear. After the referendum, he lamented that it was “unwise” to give people their say as they’d choose to leave the European Union; and he forecast a Third World War without, however, specifying the *casus belli*. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel was “saddened” by what had happened in Italy. Her foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, spoke for E.U. officialdom: “This is a government crisis not a state crisis. It is not the demise of the Western world but it is not a positive contribution in the midst of our crisis situation in Europe.” On behalf of

France, President François Hollande offered all his sympathy and his “hopes Italy can find the means to overcome this situation.”

François Hollande and Angela Merkel have both reached rare levels of unpopularity due to their mishandling of Muslim immigration, and this is likely to be the central issue in next year’s elections in France and Germany. A prominent Five Star member of parliament predicts that these elections will cast doubt on the euro. Both countries have minority nationalist parties, the Front National in France and the *Alternativ für Deutschland* in Germany. Their respective leaders, Marine Le Pen and Frauke Petry, coincidentally both women, may be less colorful than Grillo but they put forward very similar arguments and sentiments. As an opposition, they throw into relief the central fact that only the will of a restricted closed-shop of politicians holds the European Union together.

Will is by definition arbitrary and personal. Previous attempts to construct a state because someone ambitious and powerful has willed it have all ended in disasters, the worst of them, dictatorship in living memory. The Camerons and the Renzis, the Hollandes and the Merckels join the list of familiar figures whose exercise of will is their undoing. Their successors are also bound to destroy themselves, so long as there is no possibility of replacing the will of the few with the consent of the many. That is the stuff of tragedy.